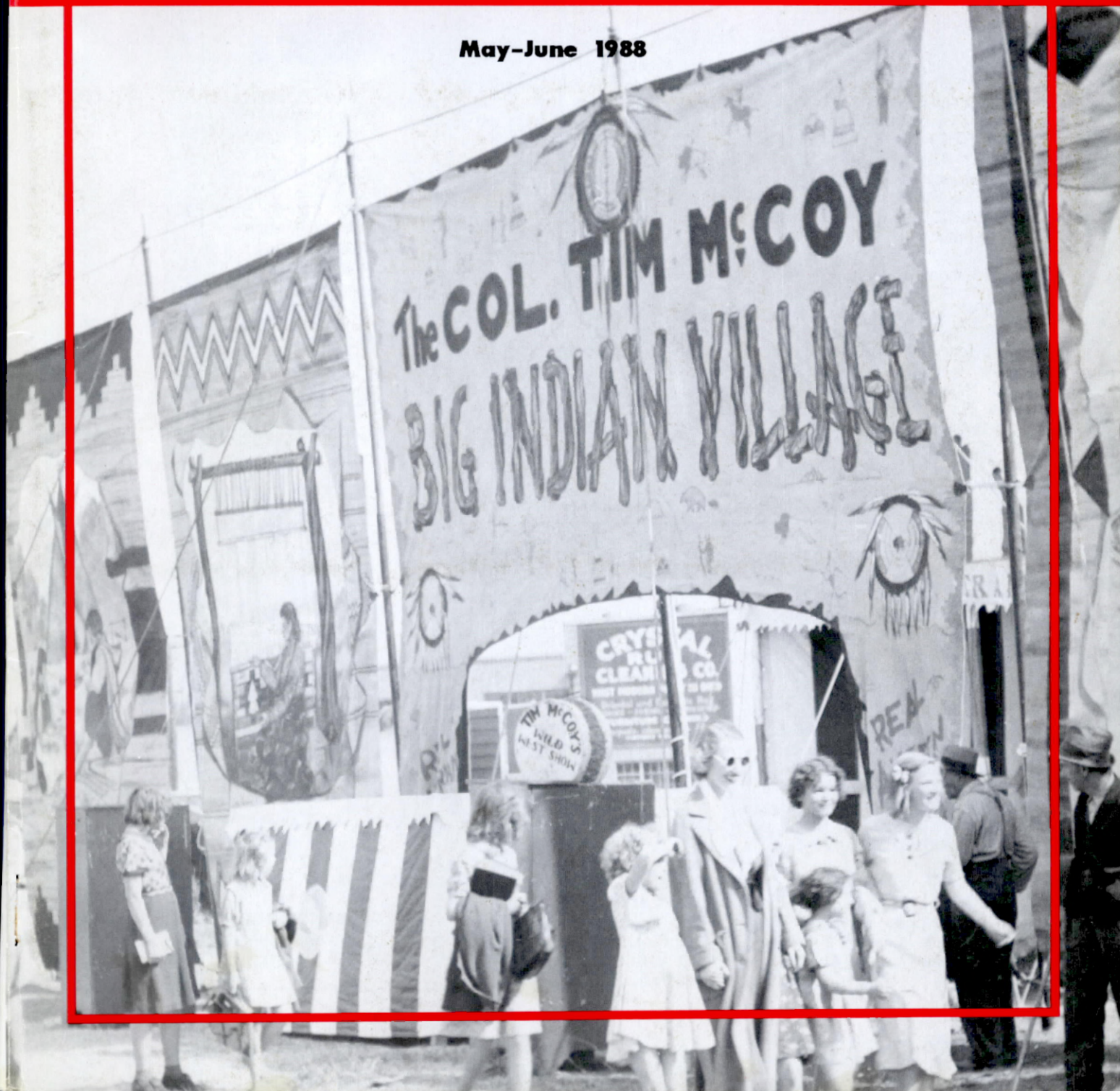


STANDING RIDERS AND THEIR ACROBATIC ART

BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

May-June 1988



The Journal of the **BANDWAGON** Circus Historical Society

Vol. 32, No. 3

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The 1938 circus season, fifty years ago, was a most momentous one. Six railroad shows opened the season; only two finished. During the season Ringling-Barnum, Cole Bros., Hagenbeck-Wallace and Col. Tim McCoy's Wild West closed early. Only the new Robbins Bros. and Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto circuses finished their tours.

The Corporation titles--Al G. Barnes, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Sells-Floto and John Robinson--were never again used.

Only Cole Bros. and Ringling-Barnum returned in 1939.

The beautiful new forty car Col. Tim McCoy's Real Wild West and Rough Riders of the World closed after only a few weeks. The Indian Village served as the side show on the McCoy midway.

ARE YOUR DUES PAID?

CHS dues and subscription notices were sent by the Secretary-Treasurer early in May.

If your dues or subscription payment is not received by July 1, 1988 the July-August issue will not be sent to you.

Do not miss a single issue of *Bandwagon*; make sure you have mailed your payment.

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1988 CHS CONVENTION

Enclosed with this issue is a registration card for the 1988 Circus Historical Society convention to be held in Shelburne, Vermont from August 10 to 13. The festivities will begin with a showing of rare films from the Circus World Museum on Wednesday evening, August 10 and conclude with the ever-popular circusiana auction on Saturday night, August 13. In between will be talks by Big Apple Circus performers and a performance by that stellar troupe; papers on such diverse topics as Clyde Beatty, the Loretta Twins, Grizzly Adams, and the origin of the 40 horse hitch; a visit to the world famous Shelburne Museum with a special viewing of their rare circus poster collection; and the banquet with great speakers.

Advance registration is \$43.00 per member and \$40.00 for each additional non-member accompanying a CHS member. Registrations received after July 15 will be \$48.00 for members and \$45.00 each for their guests. The registration includes all fees including admission to the Big Apple Circus, the Shelburne Museum, sessions with Big Apple personnel, historical presentations, movies, Shelburne Museum circus poster exhibition, banquet, and circusiana auction.

Also enclosed is an advance reservation request for the Windjammer

FINANCIAL STATEMENT CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAY 1, 1987 TO APRIL 30, 1988

Cash beginning 5-1-87:
Savings Account 3,611.32
Checking Account 160.62
Cash 8.85
Total \$3,780.79

RECEIPTS
Dues 23,815.32
Subscriptions 3,138.00
Advertising 2,978.00
Bank Interest 954.72
1987 Convention (includes auction) 6,381.00
Misc. Donations 145.00
Total \$40,065.79

EXPENSES
Bandwagon Printing 30,606.53
Supplies and Expenses 1,948.84
Postage 2,158.40
1987 Convention 3,685.86
Bank Service Charge 109.73
Total \$38,509.36
Beginning Cash 3,780.79
Receipts 40,065.79
One Outstanding Check 100.00
Postage Stamps 36.26
Total \$43,982.84
Expenses 38,509.36
Year End Surplus \$5,473.48

Submitted by Mrs. Johann W. Dahlinger, Secretary-Treasurer

Econo Lodge. The special rates to CHS members are: \$49 for a single; \$59 for a double; \$63 for a triple; \$67 for a quad; and \$75 for suites. This card should be sent directly to the hotel by July 15.

Please return your registration and reservation card as soon as possible as both hotel rooms and banquet seating are somewhat limited. Those wishing further information on travel arrangements to the Burlington-Shelburne area should contact: Pam Hurst, The Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce, P. O. Box 453, Burlington, Vermont 05402 or call her at 802-863-3489.

This promises to be a wonderful convention with a great circus and great speakers and presentations in a great location. Plan to attend today.

BANDWAGON INDEX

A number of members have expressed a desire for an index of *Bandwagon* articles. Such an index covering the years 1957 when the journal assumed its current format to the present is being considered. Membership interest will strongly influence the decision to proceed with this project.

Members are encouraged to voice their opinion on the publication of an index. Cost is not a factor as an index can be printed rather inexpensively and would be distributed in the same way as the directory. The compilation of such a booklet, however, would be very time consuming and before proceeding the officers would like to know the extent of interest in it.



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Standing Riders and Their Acrobatic Art

PART ONE
By John Daniel Draper

Introductory Note

This article has been prepared to parallel a Circus World Museum exhibit in Baraboo, Wisconsin in 1988 of some 40 photographs of standing riders.

The list of bareback artists included is of necessity neither complete nor are the biographical sketches full length. Each of these riders or family of riders deserves a much fuller treatment which will be undertaken as time permits. At that time additional artists will also be included in this group.

A Brief History of Riding Acts

Circus riding acts appear to have originated in England with Philip Astley in the 1770's and they quickly spread to France and America. Among others, early riders were Charles Hughes in England, John Bill Ricketts, Jacob Bates and Thomas Poole in America and the Franconis in France.

It was soon discovered that a circus ring forty two feet diameter (England) or thirteen meters (France) provided the maximum centrifugal force for aiding a standing rider on a horse to maintain his balance.

The first standing riders employed a type of saddle into which their feet could be secured. Later riders employed pads that ranged from platform-like arrangements on the horse's back to something akin to a close fitting saddle blanket.

The earliest backward somersault on a padded horse from standing position to standing position was made probably by Levi North in 1839. Prior to that time a rider by the name of Rogers had performed the more difficult forward somersault on a running horse, alighting astride. Around 1834 Richard Sands had performed somersaults from a horse's back to the ground.

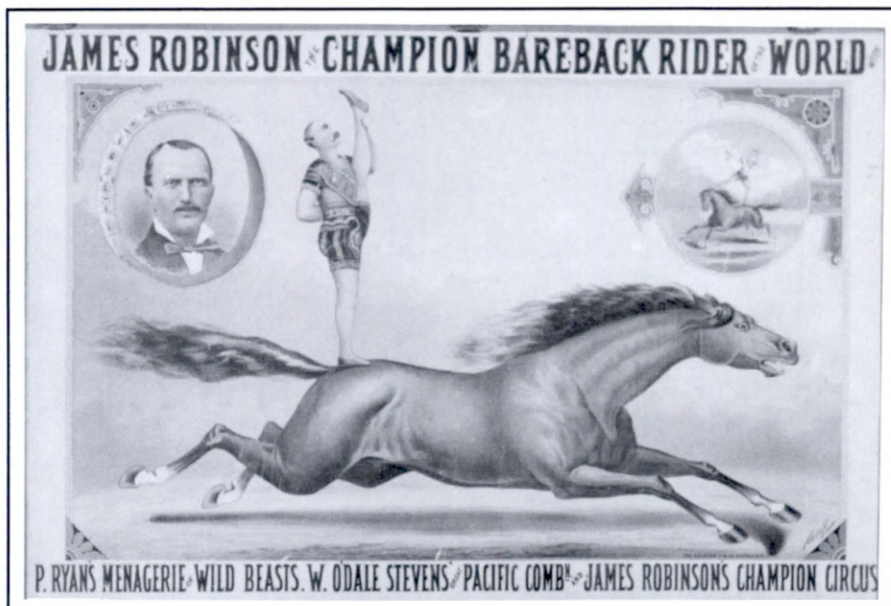
In 1846 John Glenroy was credited with performing the first somersault on a bare backed horse from standing position to standing position. By 1873 this accomplishment was repeated for the first time by a woman, Molly Brown, the daughter of Mme. Tourniaire. By the end of the century her niece, Josie DeMott Robinson, was the second woman to perform the somersault on a bareback horse.

At the turn of the century Oscar Lowande was the first person in public to ever turn a backward somersault from one horse to another running in tandem. This feat occurred on the Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Circus appearing at Madison Square Garden. In the second decade of this century May Wirth, followed by Rosa Rosalind, was performing this act. In the 1930's Zeffa Loyal became the third woman to perform this feat.

In the 1930's the Cristianis were

riding act, family riding acts became very popular in this century. They might incorporate three to five horses cantering in line abreast with a pyramid of up to eight riders mounted on them. These great equestrian productions were the hallmark of such families as the Hannefords, Loyal-Repenskys, Cristianis and Zoppes.

To indicate the popularity that bareback riding once had in America, in 1904 when the Orrin Davenport troupe joined Ringling Bros. Circus there were



James Robinson is shown on a lithograph of the Ryan and Robinson show during the 1882 season. All illustrations are from the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

doing unusual somersaulting acts. The most remarkable of these tricks was done by Lucio when he, standing on the back of a trotting horse, would throw a backward somersault over a second horse and land on the back of a third one in a combined backward and sidewise direction.

The bareback somersaulting tradition continues today with the work of such riders as Timmy Loyal, James Zoppe, Giovanni Zoppe and Mark Karoly.

In addition to the single (principal)

thirty two bareback riders on that show alone.

James Robinson (1835-1917)

James Robinson (James Michael Fitzgerald), long heralded the "bareback champion," could turn twenty three complete and consecutive backward or forward somersaults on the bare back of his horse as it circled the ring. Very small in stature, at his prime he weighed only one hundred twenty one pounds and was five feet five inches tall.

He introduced dancing and jumping up and down on the back of his horse. In doing this, at regular intervals he would let the horse run out from under him and as his feet met the ground he would

then spring again to the back of his faithful horse "Bull." He could turn somersaults over five foot wide banners and at times would balance a boy, who stood upright on Robinson's head as the latter made ten or twelve revolutions of the ring. According to all the natural laws, Robinson was the correct height, weight and build to accomplish what he did. He was flat footed with no instep. This fact enabled him to alight on the backs of his horses like a feather. His career extended from 1845 until 1892.

Born in Boston, as a small boy Robinson was bound out to John Robinson as an apprentice on Robinson & Eldred's Great Southern Circus. Starting as a stable boy, he learned to care for horses and then followed a rigid course in physical development before he was taken into the ring to learn riding.

John Glenroy had been doing bareback somersault riding since 1846, being the first and only one to do this act at the time. Robinson perfected Glenroy's feat, polished it and by 1850 he was doing it better in public than Glenroy. James Robinson was now recognized as a star. His managers threw down a challenge to Glenroy, Eaton Stone, Levi J. North and James Hernandez, his supposed rivals. Only the last mentioned met the challenge for a contest which was held at Washington, D. C. in 1857. Robinson won with a presentation that finished with four complete somersaults in one turn around the ring, both forwards and backs. Declared champion of the world, he signed with Howes & Cushing's American Circus for the English tour of 1858. He opened at the Royal Alhambra Palace on May 14, 1858 before Queen Victoria.

After touring the continent filling various dates, he returned to America in 1861. By the winter of 1863 he had his initial experience as a circus proprietor with a Chicago indoor show. His partner was Frank J. Howes.

In the winter of 1864-65 he presented at New Orleans his great twisting somersault, where facing the horse's head, he did a back somersault and landed with his back to the horse's head, repeating four times in one revolution around the ring, alternating with face front and rear. His most marvelous feat was when he stood on the horse's bare back balanced on one foot with the other leg straight up and perpendicular to the horse. His boy Clarence took the same position standing on Robinson's head.

It was not only what he did but the showmanship with which he performed that established him as a great artist. After another tour of the continent, he

returned to America to be on the L. B. Lent Circus, his own James Robinson Circus, the Great Eastern Circus and in 1875 with Montgomery Queen. In 1876 he toured with Cooper & Bailey in Australia, New Zealand, Java and India. On that show at San Francisco in Sept. of 1876 he received a salary of \$1000 per week. His last big time riding was with Sells Bros. in 1883 and 1884. As he started to decline in ability, he rode with a number of smaller circuses. Due to pride, instead of signing for a small salary which was all that could be offered, he rode on these shows for a percentage of the profits.

On his retirement he operated a training barn at Mexico, Missouri for fine ring horses. He was a master trainer and as a rider had been so versatile that it would be difficult to imagine any future rider's doing anything on the back of a single horse that he had not already done.

Charles Fish (1848-1895)

Fish's bareback riding was described as some of the finest ever witnessed as he turned backward and forward somersaults or as he stood with his back to the horse's head and threw a somersault over a banner while pirouetting and alighting on his feet with his face to the horse's head. He also did the running jump-up to the horse's back, landing squarely on his feet. In addition to his featured principal somersault and voltige riding, he was superb in his classic impersonation of the Derby Jockey and in his extraordinary leaping and statuesque posing characterizations on a trotting horse, feats unrivaled for their peculiar and hazardous nature. His great skill in riding and controlling nine horses at one time was sensational. In spite of this great artistic ability, while performing at the Cirque Medrano he was hissed off by the Europeans because they preferred the more gentle adagio poses and dainty pirouettes to his remarkably vigorous athletic stunts. At the age of nine, Charles Fish was apprenticed to James McFarland, a tight rope performer on Spalding & Rogers Circus. When McFarland was murdered in an incident

related to a domestic quarrel, young Fish was indentured for a period of seventy eight months at the wage of \$40 per year to C. J. Rogers, the junior partner of the firm. Rogers taught him the art of riding as the show travelled throughout the country as well as to Canada, South America and the West Indies.

In the beginning his diminutive size and general appearance worked against him and for a while his self esteem and egotism overbalanced his artistic ability. However, at the expiration of his apprenticeship in 1864, Fish became a featured rider at \$100 per week. Later he regularly earned \$300 per week and in 1877 and 1878 P. T. Barnum advertized a challenge of \$50,000 per year to produce his equal.

He began riding professionally when he joined S. B. Howes' show where he took the place of James Robinson as a bareback rider. During his career of some thirty seven years he appeared on thirty five different shows in North America. In Europe he performed in Madrid, Paris, Vienna, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Glasgow, London and in 1886



The great skill and versatility of Charles Fish is shown in this 1891 Barnum & Bailey lithograph.

before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle. Hengler's Circus, on which Fish was then performing, was the first that Her Majesty had witnessed since the death of Prince Albert twenty five years before.

Fish's appearance sometimes on two or three shows in the same season indicated that, as a very high salaried performer, no one show could conveniently meet his salary for the entire season. This situation, however, probably did not exist in the cases of Montgomery

Queen, where he appeared from March 1874 until April 20, 1875, or P. T. Barnum, where he began to do the difficult forward somersault in 1878, or Ringling Bros., where he was contracted for portions of the last four years of his life. He did not survive to fulfill the fourth contract, dying of pneumonia very early in the season of 1895.

In addition to his artistry in riding, Fish had a long standing interest in painting landscapes and in the large cities where he appeared he spent much spare time visiting the art galleries. Clever as a pen and ink sketch artist, he contributed worthy drawings for the 1894 Ringling Bros. route book. He also demonstrated considerable ability as a writer, sending back to America many interesting accounts of his experiences and those of his colleagues while in Europe. In 1888 he was the author of the Frank A. Robbins route book.

During much of his career he met James Robinson in championship matches for recognition as top rider of the world. Usually Robinson held a very slight edge because of his apparently superior sense of balance. However, Fish was superior to Robinson in performing pirouettes while riding bareback.

Elena Jeal (1851-1901) and Linda Jeal (1852-1941)

The career of Linda Jeal was inseparably entwined with that of her sister Elena. In a lithograph of 1882 they were shown riding in their great six horse act. Elena was carrying Linda who was the top mounter. They were reputed to be the first pair ever to do a carrying act of this sort. Linda Jeal in 1879 was featured on P. T. Barnum's Circus in her famous "Flaming Zone" bareback riding act where her specially trained horse "Pluto" leaped through a hoop of blazing petroleum with her standing on his back. Elena regularly rode a pleasing bareback trick act jumping through a very small hoop and over a broad banner.

For a more detailed account of the careers of the Jeal sisters, see "Linda Jeal and Her Equestrian Kin," *Bandwagon*, May-June 1987 by J. D. Draper.

William Showles (1857-1924) and Daisy Belmont (1870-1896)

William Showles (William Christian) was the adopted son of Jacob and Elizabeth Showles. She was the daughter of Dan Rice. Jacob Showles, a flying ring



This litho illustrates the pioneer carrying act of the Jeal sisters in 1882. Elena carried Linda who was top mounter.

performer and juggler of big globes while lying on his back on a horse circling the ring, was not a rider. Willie Showles taught himself how to ride. By the age of ten he did somersaults on a bareback horse and also sat and stood on a chair while riding his horse around the ring.

In his prime, Showles was most supple and graceful, unrivalled and daring in his jockey riding act and great in his forward and backward somersaults. He

This 1892 Sells Bros. litho depicts the features of the riding of William Showles and his wife, Daisy Belmont.



could stand on his hands on the back of a galloping horse as well as ride on the flank of the horse. "Straight as an arrow he would land erect on the rump of a horse going at breakneck speed, never moving a muscle until he made his final backward somersault, landing on the ground. He completed his act by turning cart wheels to the ring entrance, where he made his graceful bow."

In the early years he appeared on a number of shows: Older (1871), Great North American (1872), John O'Brien (1873), Ben Maginley (1874), Scott's Circus (1875), Dan Rice (1876-1878), Van Amburgh (1879, 1881), Batcheller & Doris (1882), John B. Doris (1883-1885) and Adam Forepaugh (1887). For two seasons he opened on Barnum and after a few weeks switched to Sells Bros. (1888, 1891). He went to Olympia with Barnum & Bailey in the winter of 1889-90. He was on Sells Bros. in 1889 through 1892 including the Australian tour and in 1893 joined Barnum & Bailey, where he remained through the English tour of 1899.

While trouping in Europe, he gathered some performers and left Barnum and Bailey in Hungary to go out on his own. The venture was not a success and he had to admit defeat. Later his riding career was brought to a close when he broke his leg while riding on a circus in Budapest. During his European travels he had become a good friend of Edwin Hanford, Sr., an English circus owner and the father of Poodles.

Eventually Showles was virtually penniless. Keeping his identity secret, he secured a job as an elevator operator in a New York City apartment building. Becoming very ill in March of 1924 he staggered into Bellevue Hospital where he died on the 31st of that month. It was only hours before his death that his true identity was learned.

Showles had been married to two famous equestriennes, Sallie Marks from 1883 until a divorce in 1887 and Daisy Belmont in 1889.

Daisy Belmont developed from a skillful pad rider into a graceful bareback hurdle rider in 1885 while on Van Amburgh and then rode a principal act on Adam Forepaugh in 1886 and 1887. In 1888 and 1889 she was the star of her family's circus, the Belmont Elite Show. She was a great vaulter over gates and

bars and did a superb juggling act on horseback. Daisy was selected with her husband, as one of the greatest riders in America, to play the Olympia in London with Barnum & Bailey during the winter of 1889-90. She was on Sells Bros. with her husband for the seasons of 1890 and 1891 and went with that show to Australia in 1891-92. Daisy Belmont died quite prematurely of Bright's Disease in January of 1896.

Polly Lee (1857-1902)

Pauline Lee, daughter of the pioneer California circus proprietor Henry Charles Lee, was a graceful bareback ballerina and principal rider.

A description of her performance at San Francisco in 1891, while she was on Sells Bros., reveals the daring and grace of her presentations: "A quick vault and she was on the horse's back. Away went the horse and she on him. First on one foot, then on the other, she balanced. When the horse approached the hurdle she dropped on one knee, letting the other pink-clad limb slide down the horse's side. One hoof touched the top rail and made a great clatter, but the horse never lost his gait and the rider kept her position. The shock of alighting did not budge her an inch. Then came the balloon act. A sylph launched herself full into a paper-covered hoop and landed exactly where she wanted to be."

As early as 1872 Polly was billed as a female juggler on horseback and in 1879 she was described as the original and only female bareback juggler in the world. As she stood on her steed circling the ring she juggled four balls, then seven knives and finally spinning plates. On another occasion she would dash around the hippodrome track driving a five horse tandem team in a furious race.

In the years before 1880 Polly Lee was on such shows as the Grand Hippodrome of Lee & Ryland (1866), Crescent City Circus (1870), J. Hudson Gray's North and South American Circus in the West Indies (1872), Howes & Cushing (1875), Cooper & Bailey (1876, 1877), Great London, Sanger's Royal & Dockrill's Parisian Circus (1878) and Adam Forepaugh (1879).

From 1880 through 1895 she spent thirteen seasons on Sells Bros. including the tour to Australia. In 1883, the year of her marriage to William E. Gorman (1852-1940), she was on Sherman's Educated Horses & Hinman's Great European Circus in California. Gorman did the famous hurricane hurdle and bounding jockey acts. Later he was a manege rider and equestrian director. His sister, Laura Gorman, was the wife



Polly Lee was with Sells Bros. Circus for at least thirteen seasons in the period from 1880 through 1895. This litho was used in 1893.

of James Robinson and Gorman had been the pupil of that great artist.

Polly Lee's career as a rider ended in 1896 on Forepaugh Sells where she did both bareback and manege riding. Her last years were spent as overseer of the wardrobe and designer of costumes for that show. Known as Miss Polly to all circus people in pain or trouble, she was highly esteemed as a performer and as a lady of the finest qualities.

Oscar Lowande (1877-1956)

Oscar Lowande, perhaps the most famous member of the great Lowande family, was the son of Martinho, Sr. (1839-1927) and the nephew of Clarinda Lamkin, Julia Lowande Shipp (1870-1961), Abelardo (1853-1928), Cecil (1877-1940) and Alexander G. Lowande. He was a brother of Marietta Correia (1872-1962) and Tony, Alexander A. and Martinho Lowande, Jr. All of these relatives as well as his wife, Mamie Jackson, were prominent equestrian performers.

Oscar had a long circus career of seventy two years beginning in 1881. He became a bareback somersault rider of excellence, reputedly being the first, at least in public, to perform

a horse to horse somersault on two bareback horses running in tandem. This feat was accomplished in 1902 on Forepaugh-Sells at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

Previously he had thrown backward and forward somersaults while doing principal riding and was a four horse rider on Sanger & Lent (1896). In 1897 on Great Wallace he was a bounding jockey rider, did a carrying act with Olga Reed and participated with seven others in a bareback somersault act that featured a tallyho. On Great Wallace in quarters in 1898 he was doing a somersault, landing on one foot, and a lay out somersault, both on a galloping horse. In 1899 he joined Forepaugh-Sells where he remained through 1907.

With Miss Meers in 1900 he did a heroic bounding jockey act on two horses. They both did forward and backward leaps from the ground to the horses' backs, concluding with thrilling double leaps to the back of a single horse. The next year, after a superb exhibition of double jockey horsemanship with A. M. Davenport, there was a startling finale when these two were joined by Fred Ledgett and Sam Bennett as the four riders leaped simultaneously from the ground to a standing position on the back of a rapidly running horse.

By 1902, in addition to the horse to horse somersault already mentioned, Oscar and his wife Mamie were performing a classic pas de deux carrying act. In 1903 and 1904 he claimed a somersault from horse to horse to horse, the three horses running in tandem. He was then considered to be in the same class as James Robinson when the latter was at his best. In addition, with his wife, he performed the scenic "Flight of Inca

In 1901 Oscar Lowande, along with Albert Davenport and Fred Ledgett, was a top rider on the Forepaugh-Sells show.



& His Bride" and Mamie did a principal riding act. Oscar Lowande was at the Boston Hippodrome Circus in 1908. In that year, with William Sims and William Jameson, he did in private before witnesses some really remarkable tricks. In one, he reportedly somersaulted from the shoulders of one man to those of another while the two men were standing on bareback horses running in tandem.

In the following years he was involved with a number of circuses in a variety of capacities: Oscar Lowande Circus (1909); Forepaugh-Sells (1910); Sig Sautelle (1911-1914, 1919) as performer, equestrian director and co-owner; Hagenbeck-Wallace (1915, 1916, 1918); Sautelle & Lowande (1917) where he and his wife were principal riders, did a two horse carrying act and the Eight Lowandes were in a tallyho act; Lowande Show (1920) in South America; Lowande Bros. Circus (1925) in Cuba. In 1926 at the Cincinnati Shrine Circus the trio, Fred Derrick, Poodles Hanneford and Oscar, were riding principal acts straight, that is without comedy.

By 1935 at the age of fifty eight Oscar Lowande took up clowning, which he would do for the next eighteen years. He was on Bob Morton Circus, Al. G. Barnes Circus and James Bell Circus all in 1935, Barnes-Carruthers (1941), Walter L. Main (1941), spot dates (1942), Charles Hunt Show (1944), Sparks (1946), Orrin Davenport (1950), Aladdin Shrine Circus in Columbus, Ohio (1952).

In 1953 Oscar Lowande retired after a professional life that dated from 1881. It is a bit sad to realize that few if any who saw him clowning on Sparks in 1946, for instance, would have known or appreciated the great riding that he had done at the turn of the century.

Robert D. Stickney (1871-1941)

Robert John Danville Stickney was the son of Robert T. Stickney (1846-1928), a great leaper, pad and four horse rider, the "Apollo Belvidere of the Arena" and of Katie Robinson, the only daughter of old John Robinson. As the first grandson of John Robinson, he was named after him as well as his father and also for his place of birth, Danville, Illinois. His paternal grandfather was S. P. Stickney (1808-1877), an early four and six horse rider and instructor in all branches of the equestrian art.

From infancy, young Stickney was carried by his father in equestrian acts and was trained to ride ponies. After his formal schooling as an apprentice to



Robert D. Stickney was featured in this 1905 Great Wallace lithograph.

his father he became proficient as a principal and four horse rider and as a horse trainer.

In 1888 he went to South America with his father on James Donovan & Co. and in 1889 they were on Irwin Bros. From 1891 through 1900, except for 1898, he was on John Robinson's

The Meers Sisters, Ouika seated and Marie standing, posed in the backyard of the Barnum & Bailey Circus in the early 1900s.



Circus. It was while there in 1893 that he married Louise DeMott, sister of Josie and Willie DeMott and granddaughter of Mme. Louise Tourniaire. Louise Stickney was a beautiful rider, chiefly of high school horses. At first she rode side saddle, but in later years, particularly on Barnum & Bailey and Hagenbeck-Wallace, she drove a snow white rig with an educated horse, which stood straight on his hind legs when hitched to the wagon, one of the highest class acts on the show.

On John Robinson's Circus, Robert became a great hurricane bareback rider, that designation implying that he did a very fast riding act which included vaulting and somersaulting. He also served variously as equestrian director, assistant manager and director general of the show.

In 1901 Bob Stickney and Charles F. Robinson took out a dog and pony show that lasted for about two months before it was dissolved. The Stickneys opened with the Hargreaves Show in 1902. After one week they left because they were under contract with the newly organized Stevens & Boyle Circus. When that show folded after eight days, they returned to Hargreaves for the rest of that season and also for 1903. On Hargreaves Bob was a principal bareback and hurdle rider and Louise rode manege.

In the following years they were on a variety of circuses: Orrin Bros. in Mexico City (1904), Great Wallace (1905, 1906), Barnum & Bailey (1907, 1908), Hagenbeck-Wallace (1909, 1914), New York Hippodrome (1910), Coop & Lent (1916) and Sells-Floto (1920) as well as in vaudeville (1911, 1917). Eventually giving up principal riding, Bob rode manege and haute ecole and sometimes served as equestrian director. Louise presented her famous high school buggy act, all in white including the cake walking white dog underneath.

Later they ceased riding and for a number of years presented their trained horses, ponies and dogs in vaudeville and at parks and fairs. For a while in 1923 Bob was breaking high school and trick horses for a big horse dealer in North Platte, Nebraska. Finally retiring, they moved to Des Moines, Iowa where Robert D. Stickney went into business operating a Phillips 66 service station.

Meers Sisters

Hubert William Meers, a world renowned circus performer and star somersault rider on Chiarini's Circus as early as 1868, was the father of seven daughters, all of whom were equestriennes.

The two most famous of these, usually referred to as the Meers Sisters, were Ouika and Marie. Ouika married Danny Ryan, a general circus performer who excelled on the ground and high bars, the aerial return and as a leaper, tumbler and clown. Marie became the wife of William Melrose, an outstanding bareback somersault rider and trick jockey equestrian.

The sisters performed together, either in double jockey and bareback riding feats or as principal riders, on Barnum & Bailey from 1891 through 1899 including the English tour. They also appeared together on this show from 1905 through 1908. In 1896 their artistry was described as a "unique double equestrian character act, in which both accomplished young ladies perform with grace and skill while costumed in long skirts, all difficult feats executed which are done by most famed male riders and with equal celerity."

The 1891 newspapers said: "Meers Sisters' double jockey act is greatest feat of equestrianism ever seen." On July 4th of that year they were patriotically dressed in red, white and blue. Ouika's novel equestrian feats in 1895 included the famous serpentine dance while galloping around the ring.

After the turn of the century, except for the four years already noted, the sisters went their separate ways.

Ouika was a "petite and graceful principal bareback equestrienne" on Forepaugh-Sells for 1902 through 1904. In 1909 she teamed with Rose Wentworth in a riding act at the New York Hippodrome. The next year she was at Dreamland, Coney Island, New York and in 1911 with Wirth's Circus. After that she soon retired.

Marie, on the other hand, remained in the business until immediately before her death in 1948. Through 1921 she performed as a bareback rider, quite often with her husband, William Melrose (1875-1934), in a double jockey and combination riding act. In 1910 on Forepaugh-Sells it was described as a "sensational double jockey act, exhibiting remarkable skill, grace and daring, introducing jumping from the ground to the back of a swiftly running horse, and exhilarating whirlwind riding."

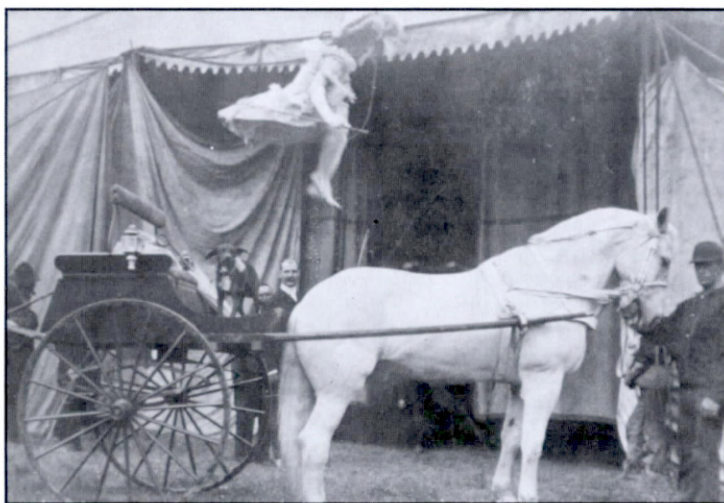
She appeared on Barnum & Bailey from 1901 to 1903 including the Netherlands tour, Sells-Floto (1909), Forepaugh-Sells (1910) and Ringling Bros. (1911), where the double riding with

W. L. Melrose netted \$150 per week. She worked with her husband on Howe's Great London (1912-1914), Hagenbeck-Wallace (1919, 1921) and Shipp & Feltus in South America (1920). In 1916 and 1917 she was on John Robinson's Circus where in 1916 she rode a carrying act with Gordon Orton.

Marie ended her career as "Madame Marie (or Maree) & Her Pals." At one time or another the "pals" included a dog and Shetland pony revue, monkeys, goats, a bear and an unrideable mule. From 1929 through 1948 she appeared with Polack Bros., Bob Morton or Tom Packs at Shrine circuses and the like all over the country. She died on December 30, 1948 within days of closing her Polack Bros. dates for that season.

Rose Wentworth

Rose Wentworth, who began her career in British pantomime, was encouraged by James Bailey to take up equestrian work. The suggestion appealed to her because of her fondness for horses. Writing later about her career, she said:



Rose Wentworth's riding act often featured the English road cart from above which she leaped to the horse's back and vice versa during her performance.

"Sometimes I am asked about the best preparation for equestrian work. I think part of my own success is due to my long apprenticeship in dancing. Some of the new students of this act think it is all a matter of quickness and balance; but there is a good deal more in it than that. There must be a style and dash which nothing but long practice in graceful movement can give. You must be something more than an ordinary trick rider to make the people enthusiastic."

She appeared in 1893 on Forepaugh-Sells as a contortionist and performed

on the Barnum & Bailey Circus from 1894 through 1905 including the five seasons that the show was in Europe. For part of 1898 she was also on John Robinson's Circus.

Except for some early aerial presentations and some contortion acts that were presented as late as 1897, all of her work starting in 1895 was focused on bareback equestrianism. Her riding act often featured an English road cart from which she executed fearless somersaults to the back of a horse while both were in motion. Fred Derrick and Gilbert Eldred appeared with her at different times in this act. She did her principal act with ease and marked ability and was billed in 1898 on Barnum & Bailey's provincial tour of England as the only female principal bareback rider with somersaults. She developed a double bareback jockey act that she performed with Amelia Feeley (1899) and Fred Derrick (1901). It concluded with double simultaneous leaps from the ground to the back of a single horse. In 1904 she was presenting an "absolutely

original and up to date riding and driving feature with all the latest and best dressed Parisian modes on horseback, a superb blending of grace, beauty, style and startling novelty."

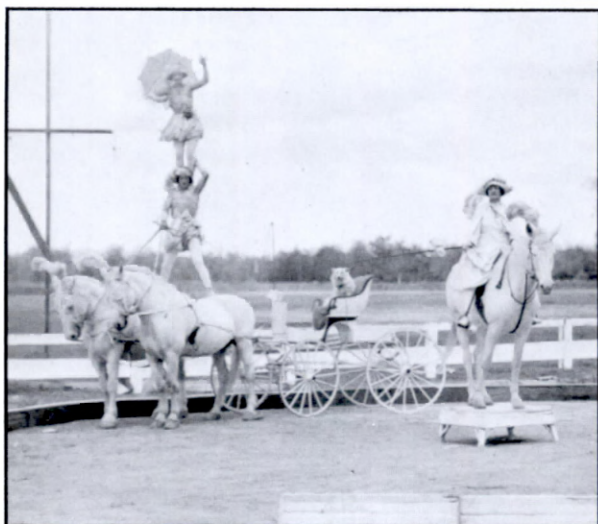
After her dozen seasons on Barnum & Bailey, Rose Wentworth was in vaudeville with the cart act in 1906 and on Publiones Circus in Cuba in 1907, where she received \$125 per week for a variety of turns including the cart, principal and single jockey acts. She performed her brilliant principal act on Ringling Bros. in 1908 after which she joined the Frank Spellman Shows at Toledo, Ohio in 1909.

By the next year she was living in retirement with her husband, Ed Carr, a ranchman and horse dealer, on their western acreage where she accompanied him on buffalo hunts and the round-ups. Appropriately, in 1913, she returned to the show world for one season on Buffalo Bill's Wild West and participated in the buffalo races.

In 1925, as a sort of farewell to the profession, the retired world famous somersault rider gave a dinner party for fourteen at her beautiful home in Willow Grove, near Philadelphia. Mr. and Mrs. Fred Bradna and Mr. and Mrs. Edward Silbon were the guests of honor.

Hocum Family

In September of 1890 the following



The Hocum family buggy and carrying act (circa 1925) was featured at state and county fairs.

ad appeared in the *New York Clipper*: "Gentleman of 20 wishes to learn bareback riding; also wire walking and other acts suitable for a circus. Those who have schools for that purpose please address E. V. Hocum, Marvin, Grant Co., N. D."

Elbridge Vinton Hocum (1870-1926) did find his opportunity to learn bareback riding and the wire act. As early as 1894 he joined Gollmar Bros. Circus and in 1896 married Maude Gollmar (1875-1956), the daughter of Jacob Gollmar, one of the proprietors. She had started her own circus career early as a bareback rider.

The Hocums were to have three children: Gladys, Ray and Lucille. Gladys, the eldest, started in show business at the age of 4, standing on E. V.'s shoulder as he rode astride two horses. Their featured act, "Equestrians Par Excellence," consisted of two white horses pulling a white and gold buggy while the two girls climbed up on their father who was standing with one foot on the back of each horse. After Gladys left the family act, Ray took her place dressed as a girl with long curls. In this way they preserved the original appearance of the stunt with two girls perched on their dad's shoulders. The Hocums also did a tight wire act with their two daughters.

Between 1894 and 1925 they appeared on a number of circuses: Gollmar Bros. (7 seasons), Walter L. Main (5 seasons), Campbell Bros. (4 seasons), Frank A. Robbins (4 seasons) and two seasons each on Cole Bros. and Norris & Rowe. They were also one season each on: Skerbeck Family Shows (1899), John Robinson's Circus (1900), Great Floto Shows (1905), Ro-

binson's Famous Circus (1910) and the Mighty Haag Shows (1913) as well as Baucher Carnival Co. in 1903 and Patterson Carnival Co. in 1912. Before his marriage, Elbridge had been with Oliver's Great Eastern Shows in 1893 and J. H. LaPearl's Circus in 1896. For several years their acts appeared on more than one of these shows in the same season.

By 1916 their "society" riding act was widely booked at various state and county fairs. In 1925 it featured a buggy and carrying act in which the performers not only worked bareback on their horses but also leaped from the buggy to the horses and vice versa.

Hobsons

The name of Homer D. Hobson (1871-1959), son of circus manager Clay D. Hobson (1840-1919), appeared in an 1886 ad: "Notice, Circus Managers - Uncle Joe Tinkham & Master Homer Hobson, bare-backed riders. Homer does principal with somersaults."

In 1887 Homer joined Holland & McMahon's Circus and he was on McMahon's Circus for the seasons of 1888 through 1890. In those early years he also performed on Sells Bros. (1891, 1895), Miles Orton (1892), Hobson Bros. (1893) and in Mexico City on Orrin Bros. (1894).

By 1896 he and his wife Estella Dreyfus (1875-1955), a good equestrienne in her own right, were performing a two horse carrying act and a hurdle act on Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. They were there also for the next two seasons. In 1899 they were on Walter L. Main and in 1900 they joined Ringling Bros. where they performed for ten years. Also, in 1906 they appeared at the first Shrine circus ever, which was held in Detroit, Michigan. As early as 1903 they were doing a good double jockey act and Homer was riding a bounding jockey act. A quotation from a 1909 account read as follows: "The Hobsons appeared in Ring No. 3 of the Ringling Show in riding

that was thoroughly interesting and most skillful. In pink jockey costumes the couple rode single and double, performing their list of tricks with an ease that was delightful to watch and finishing by introducing a riding dog (Senator), which sprang upon the back of the horse and thence to the ground with a keen delight in the proceedings. Mr. Hobson's leaps to the back of the running horse from the ground were especially well done and he landed on his feet and maintained his balance without a miss. Later the Hobsons performed a pretty carrying act, the lady being balanced in a number of graceful poses."

In 1910 the Hobsons went to Sells-Floto where they remained through the 1925 season and were also there in 1931. During this time their sons, Homer, Jr. and Herbert, were maturing and in September of 1925 Homer, Jr. married Juanita Pollie who immediately joined the family act.

About this time Earl Chapin May commented on the Hobson family riding act: "Homer Hobson, Jr. and Herbert have been trouping since infancy. Young Homer, in clowning, is dragged face downward around the ring clinging to the tail of the galloping horse which frequently kicks cinders or gravel into his mouth. I have seen the boy's lips bleed many times but he thrives on rough work of that kind. He also does 'step-offs' from a racing 'finish' horse. 'Step-offs' are difficult. While one foot is on the hindpart of the moving horse, the other foot must touch the ground, but the second foot must follow rapidly."

"Herbert works with Homer, Jr., made up as a girl. He also doubles with the other Hobsons in the Indian riding act. Herbert likes the Indian act best because he has a strong leaning toward

Juanita Hobson (Mrs. Homer Hobson, Jr.) riding bareback over low fire hurdles on Robbins Bros. Circus in 1938.



the wild west stuff. He also does rope spinning in the after show or concert just like a westerner."

The Indian riding act mentioned above was presented as early as 1916 and the Hobson riders were called the Powhaskys. "The brightly burning fires, the sound of the tomtoms, the beauty of the red flare against the dark curtain of the night, the always fascinating teepee and the weird yelps of the Indians made this a genuine novelty. The whips cracked faster, the horses speeded up to the limit and the riders rushed through one difficult stunt after another with a rapidity that was all but unbelievable."

In 1916 Homer, Jr. had done his first somersault on a bareback horse. Eventually he became the great riding clown of the group, a role that had been universally revived because of the superb performances of Poodles Hanneford on Barnum & Bailey. "The comedian performed with a zest and fearless disregard for danger that demanded unstinted praise. He somersaulted to and from the horse with lightning speed and an almost uncanny acrobatic skill."

For their last decade or so of performing, the Hobsons appeared on Walter L. Main (1926, 1927), at fairs (1928, 1932), on Hagenbeck-Wallace (1929, 1933), Robbins Bros. (1930, 1938), Sam B. Dill (1934), Tom Mix (1935, 1936) and Cole Bros. (1937, 1938). Herbert was a principal rider on the Great American Circus in 1939 and Juanita appeared at the Hamid Pier in Atlantic City in 1940.

Juanita became a strong feature of the family act during these later years and beginning in about 1931 was also the mainstay as a graceful principal rider.

The Hobson family act came to an end in 1938 with the retirement of Homer D. Hobson, Sr. His wife Estella had retired in 1931.

Orrin Davenport (1885-1962)

Orrin Davenport was the son of John L. Davenport, famous talking and singing clown as well as perch, trapeze and equestrian performer. John's chief roles of clown and ringmaster kept him close to his real love, equestrianism, which he did not practice because of his somewhat large size.

However, as early as 1858

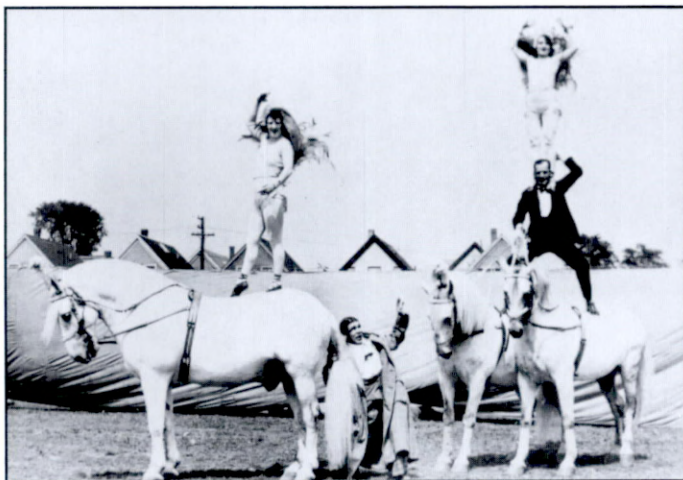


Orrin Davenport performed on Barnum & Bailey with his sister Victoria, shown here circa 1910 standing on his shoulders, and with his sister May standing on the single bareback horse.

he had set up a training barn for riders and he gave five of his children--John, Jr., Albert, May, Orrin and Lulu--a very thorough background in principal and somersault riding. John L. Davenport's apprenticeship had been with John Robinson and Charles J. Rogers. Orrin's mother, Ella Hollis, was also a good rider as was her brother, Orrin Hollis, who had been trained by Davenport.

Orrin Davenport began his career on the MacDonald Wagon Show (1900), was then on Sells & Gray (1901, 1902) and on Sells & Downs with sister Lulu (1903). Afterwards he had three years on Ringling Bros. and one on Fore-

The Walter Guice Troupe usually presented a comedy riding act. This photo shows Flora Bedini Guice at left with Walter Guice, the clown, on the ground between the horses. The two riders at right are Melvin and Bessie Hollis.



paugh-Sells. In 1906 he married Victoria Bedini of the great equestrian family of Hodgini-Bedini. From 1908 until 1918 the Davenports were on Barnum & Bailey followed by three seasons on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. There was a seven year engagement on Hagenbeck-Wallace until 1928 and a further five year run with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. In 1930 the five person act was contracted at \$400 per week. In the meanwhile Orrin Davenport became the pioneer and most famous producer of winter

Shrine shows in America, being involved with the very first one in Detroit in 1906. He continued in this activity until his death in 1962. In single or principal riding Orrin could do everything anyone else could do at that time. A product of American training, "he had continental style, grace as well as courage." He was a great somersault bareback rider and horse to horse backward somersault rider. To meet the competition from the Wirth family when they arrived from Australia, he developed a new trick in which, with three horses running in a single file, he somersaulted in rapid succession from the first to the second to the third with a backflip to the ground. He did forward and back somersaults over objects, the jump-ups including the one foot jump-up backward to the horse. He was also a hurdle rider.

His great originality was evidenced in family acts which he devised, including carrying acts and comedy roles. The career of his son, Orrin, Jr., was ended in 1929 when that young man unfortunately broke his knee cap. With hard work and long practice, until that tragedy,

his prospects for success as a great rider had been very promising. Orrin's second wife, Dorothy Siegrist, whom he married in the 1920's, rode with him in all his outstanding presentations.

Throughout his entire life, Orrin maintained a great reputation as a performer, a producer and a gentleman.

Walter Guice and Flora Guice

Walter Guice, a talented aerial bar performer and rider and the son of Olga Reed, was a native of Danville, Illinois, the winterquarters of the J. H. LaPearl Circus. His older sister Elizabeth was adopted by the La-

Pearl family. She appeared as Elizabeth LaPearl in an equestrian carrying act with Ab Johnson.

Walter began his career as a kid boxer on Dashington Bros. (1902). Later he was on Busby Bros. (1904) and on Carl Hagenbeck (1906), where he performed with the Ellett aerial bar troupe.

In 1908 he married Flora Bedini (1890-1950), daughter of Victor Bedini and Adele Hodgini Bedini, who had a riding act on Barnum & Bailey in 1903 and on Ringling Bros. from 1904 until 1907. Flora had appeared as a principal rider with the family act. She had a sister Victoria who married Orrin Davenport.

From 1909 through 1911 Flora and Walter were on Sells-Floto where she did a principal act and he performed on the bars. In 1912 they moved to Sparks Circus where they stayed through 1915. Walter had taken up riding and he appeared in a bareback act with his wife and his mother. By 1915 Walter joined his wife as a principal rider and also did a double jockey act with her. On Gollmar Bros. in 1916 the principal riders were Charles and Elizabeth Rooney, Minnie Hodgini and the Guices. For the season of 1917 they started on Coop & Lent and then switched to the R. T. Richards Circus. Beginning in 1918 the Guices were on Sparks each year through 1931 except 1925, when they played fairs, and 1928 when they were on John Robinson's Circus.

Each year the Guices produced a quality comedy aerial bar act as well as a comedy riding act. Walter and Flora participated in the work of both troupes, but otherwise the composition of the two troupes was different and might vary from year to year. In 1918 Walter and his sister Lizzie did a carrying act; in 1919 Flora, Walter and the O'Wesneys were in the riding act. In 1920 it was the Guices with Melvin and Bessie Hollis. Walter Kent was added to the riding act in 1923. In 1924 the riders were called the Ballerine Troupe and included Minnie Rooney and Walter and Flora Guice. Babe Feaster was with them in 1927 and 1929. The Guices spent eight weeks on Santos & Artigas in Havana between the 1927 and 1928 seasons. In 1931 they opened with Sells-Floto at the Chicago Coliseum and played spring Shrine dates in addition to the regular season on Sparks. Starting in 1932 they had their two acts on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey for seven consecutive seasons. In 1938 they were also on Downie Bros. In some years they had as many as three aerial bar troupes in addition to the comedy riding

act. The riding act expanded at one point to include Frella Smith, Teddy and Martha Ernesto and Babe Floyd in addition to Flora and Walter, the latter doing the clowning including the famous hat throwing stunt. Between the 1933 and 1934 seasons, the Guice act appeared at the Olympia in London on Bertram Mills and in 1935 they performed for E. K. Fernandez in Hawaii.

After 1938 most of their dates through 1950, when Flora died, were played on Shrine circuses. The exceptions were Great American (1939), Chicago Stadium Circus (1941), Garden Bros. (1943), Barnes Bros. (1944, 1945), St. Louis Police Circus (1946), King Bros. (1947) and James M. Cole (1948). Their comedy riding did not appear after 1941 and a comedy trampoline act was added to the aerial bars about 1942. In 1951 Walter Guice married Bessie Hollis, the widow of Melvin Hollis. After that he confined his activities to clowning on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey until 1965.

The Riding Rooneys

Charles H. Rooney (1889-1936), son of Hugh Rooney, had four cousins, Mike, Elizabeth, John and William, a brother John B. and a sister Elizabeth Romig who became bareback riders. Before the Ringlings founded their circus in Baraboo, Wisconsin, none of the families of any of these riders had any

Shown here, mounted on "Big Max" are left to right Charles Rooney, his wife Minnie Hodgini and his sister Elizabeth (Mrs. Carl Romig).



circus connections. Yet, as the Ringling Circus grew, their talents as riders developed and they all became prominent performers.

Before his marriage to Hermine Minnie Hodgini (1890-1958), Charles Rooney had performed on Gollmar Bros. for six seasons (1906-1909, 1915, 1916), Forepaugh-Sells (1910, 1911) and Ringling Bros. (1912-1914). Prior to the accidental death of his brother in 1912, Charles had participated with him and his wife Carrie in their beautiful "act classical" with three horses in tandem drawing a nifty carriage. John, the pivot key of the act, threw those graceful somersaults from horse to horse. Later speaking of this act, Charles commented: "We claim the distinction of being the first riders to use the word 'Riding' for billing our act, dating back to 1900 when my brother John B. Rooney first used the name 'Riding Rooneys.' I have noticed more recently numerous other riding acts using the 'Riding' billing."

In the earlier years Charles did principal forward and backward somersault riding and a jockey act, was a hurdle rider, trained liberty horses and rode in a Roman standing race. He did all his turns in a fine but less elaborate style than that of John Rooney. In 1916 he worked with his sister and with Minnie Hodgini in a double combination jockey and carrying act. His marriage took place in December of that year.

For the following years Charles and Minnie Rooney called themselves the "Riding Rooneys." Over the years the troupe included Elizabeth Rooney Romig (1917), Bernie Griggs (1926), Corinne Hodgini Dearo (1928, 1931), Mr. Dunne (1928) and Mike Schirmer. The act featured somersaulting and incredible leaping on and off the backs of fast running Arabian horses, bareback and comedy riding and the inevitable Indian riding act. They formed pyramids on their mounts, performed drills and danced the latest steps. On the McIntyre Grotto Circus in 1927 Minnie, riding her Kentucky thoroughbred "Indian Love Call," executed the Spanish fandango, cake walk and fox trot. Charlie rode his daring bareback clown act in the style of Poodles Hanneford.

During these years they were on the following shows: Gollmar & Patterson (1917), John Robinson's (1917), Hagenbeck-Wallace (1918, 1919), Sells-Floto (1920), Convey & Smith (1919, 1920), Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey (1921, 1922), Sparks (1924-1926), New York Hippodrome (1924-1925), Chicago Stadium Circus combined with Miller Bros. 101 Ranch (1929), Lewis and

Zimmerman (1929, 1930), Riding Rooney All Star Attractions (1930), The Circus Princess, a colorful opera at St. Louis (1930), Walter L. Main (1930), Mack Hale Bros. (1931), Lewis Bros. (1932), All American (1933), Cole & Rice (1934), Bob Morton (1934), Barnard Bros. (1934), St. Louis Police Circus (1935). They played Shrine shows and at parks in 1925, 1928-1931 and in 1934.

Charles Rooney died suddenly of a heart attack on Christmas Eve in 1936. He was survived by his widow, who owned the trapeze act known as the "La Venia Sisters." Later she was active in the animal presentation, "Minnie Rooney and Her Pets," until about three months before her death two decades later.

Fred Ledgett and Dallie Julian

Fred Ledgett was an intrepid hurdle and somersault rider and his wife, Dallie Julian, the niece and protege of the great Linda Jeal, was one of the most beautiful and accomplished bareback somersault riders of her time.

In one of their presentations, Fred and Dallie were paired in a double bareback act which featured a high seated buggy. This act was performed on Barnum & Bailey Circus from 1906 through 1908. Fred and Dallie entered the ring seated in the vehicle drawn by two horses. They then leaped forward onto the backs of the animals and after doing some stunts, leaped back into the carriage. Unhitching the horses, they did a jockey bareback riding act featuring leaps from the ground to the backs of the horses. This very novel presentation ran for seven minutes.

For a more complete treatment of the work of this talented husband and wife team see two articles: "Linda Jeal and Her Equestrian Kin," *Bandwagon*, May-June 1987 by J. D. Draper and "Fred Ledgett and Irene Montgomery," *Bandwagon*, September-October 1987 by J. D. Draper.

Ella Bradna (1873-1957) and Fred Derrick (1880-1955)

Ella Bradna was a principal bareback rider as well as, in later years, a presenter of beautiful horses with dogs and colored doves in the "Act Beautiful." She began her circus riding at age three and on her father's circus in Bohemia she soon learned the grace and style of ballet. She became a somersault rider, learned all the steps of manege and did Roman riding. She was the equestrian star of Circus Schumann for three years and was also quite adept on the slack and tight wire.

In 1901 and 1902 Ella was featured



Fred Ledgett and Dallie Julian's double bareback act was a feature of the Barnum & Bailey Circus from 1906 through 1908.

on the Cirque Nouveau in France and at the London Hippodrome. While in London she married Fred Bradna (Fred Ferber), a young Alsatian cavalry officer, and almost immediately they came to America under contract to Barnum & Bailey for the 1903 season. The Bradnas remained on that show through 1918 and then continued with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey until retirement in 1945. Her husband became probably the most famous equestrian director of all time. Fred Derrick, a native of England, joined Barnum & Bailey in Europe in 1900. He was a great principal somersault rider. It was generally conceded that he was the only person who could leap from the ground to horseback alighting on one knee, then almost in a continued motion spring into the air, do a full pirouette and land standing on the horse's back.

From 1905 through 1918 Bradna and Derrick presented a double bareback act that featured artistic and acrobatic equitation, dancing and somersault-

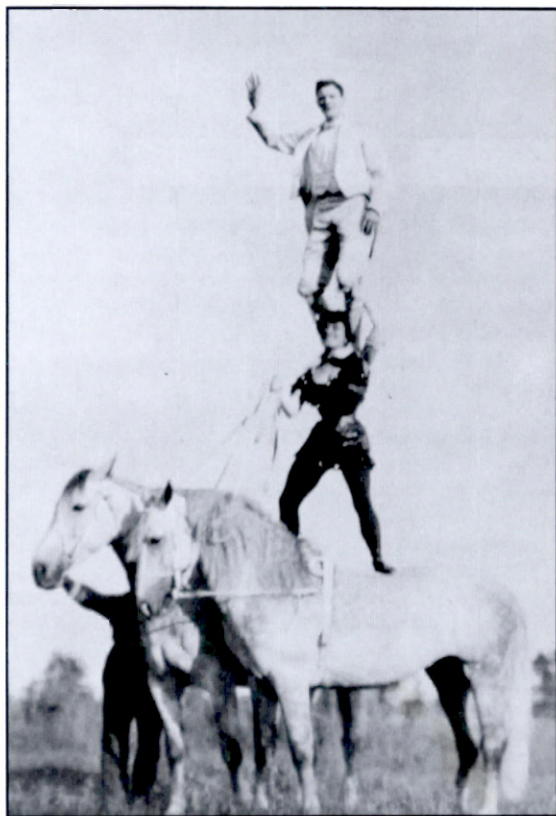
ing and the carrying act (*pas de deux*). Ella, standing Roman style on two white horses, lifted Derrick to her shoulders and he then somersaulted to the ground. Derrick did solo gymnastic feats and pirouettes on bareback and Ella toe danced. They then did bareback tricks in unison, climaxed by a two horse routine where Ella did fork jumps and pirouettes while holding the horse's tail and Derrick leaped, turned and somersaulted. Their all white costumes were perfectly stunning. Derrick wore a satin court-formal suit and Ella was in a satin bodice and tights with kid gloves to the elbow and a white ostrich plume fan.

Beginning in 1919, on the discontinuance of this act with Derrick, Ella Bradna began to present a great equestrian spectacle that has never been copied.

It employed three white horses, sixty pigeons, thirty dogs, three clowns and twelve ballet girls, all as a background for her ballet dancing on bareback. Variations of this act, with Ella later riding in the saddle, were given until almost the end of her career.

Derrick rode principal acts on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in 1919 and on Sells-Floto (1920-1922;

Ella Bradna and Fred Derrick in 1906 on the Barnum & Bailey Circus. Note that Derrick is the top mounter.



1926-1929). He also appeared on the Pantages Circuit (1923) and on Shrine dates (1924, 1926). For a number of these years he performed with the Poodles Hanneford family. In 1930 he retired to his home in England.

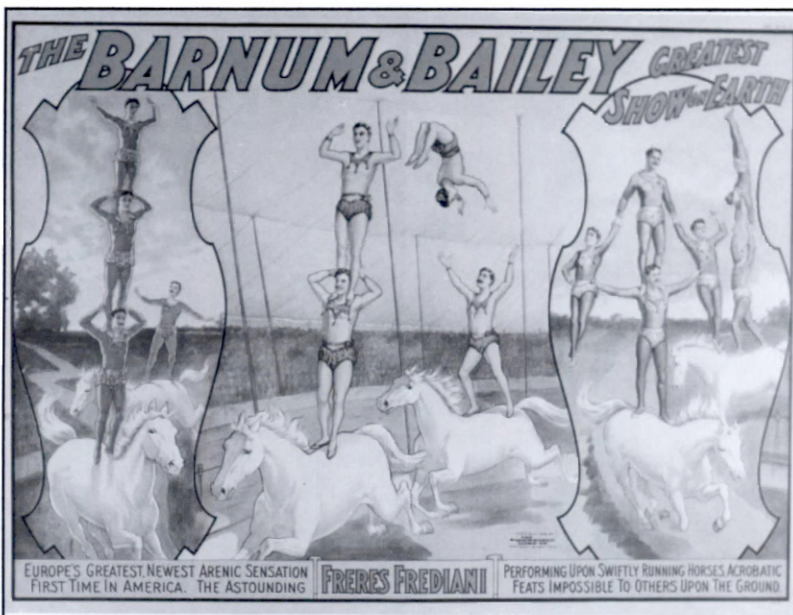
Frediani Brothers

The Frediani Brothers (Willy, Beby & Rene) did unheard of acrobatics on horseback on Barnum & Bailey in 1908. This season was the only one in which they ever appeared in the United States.

First one man mounted on the shoulders of another and both somersaulted to the ground simultaneously. In another trick, a man standing on the shoulders of a second man, who stood on a horse, did a backward somersault to the shoulders of a third man standing on a following horse, while both horses were running at full speed. As a finale they did their "colonne a trois" on one cantering horse. One brother stood on a single horse that carried a pad. This person had a second man standing on his shoulders and on the shoulders of the second man stood a third. At a given signal all three somersaulted at once to the ground. This last feat, first performed on their small family circus, was repeated early in 1908 at the Cirque Nouveau in Paris to the amazement of fellow artists.

Listen to a description that John Ringling sent from Paris to his brothers in Baraboo after he had scouted this act in Europe. You can really sense his great enthusiasm for the presentation. (The spelling, grammar etc. is Ringling's.)

"The Fredianes I wrote you about are the greatest act in the world and will be a positive sensation in America and are very useful people. They are getting 400 and 500 per week here, but he is crazy to go to America for a season, as he has his own show in Italy. You can put this act in with a riding number or an acrobatic number. They have three horses. They go around the ring very fast. They do all acrobatic tricks on the horses. . . somersault from horse up to shoulders of man on same horse. One foot pitch back somersault from first horse to shoulders of man on second horse. Double somersault pitch back from horse to shoulders of man in ring. . . . There positively never was a



This lithograph accurately illustrates the work of the Fredianis on Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1908, the only season they appeared in the United States.

circus novelty act like this before. They will also do a six acrobatic act on the ground or stage, doing twelve different doubles to shoulders--doubles from three high down to shoulders and doubles forward and backwards from shoulders to shoulders. Also two knock-about clowns and two menage riders. Mrs. Fredianes and Mr. Fredianes being first class menage riders. They have their own menage horses, but are going to leave them with their father over here as he runs a small circus in Italy. They also furnish one first class Jockey act or one Jockey rider to go in any of our acts. You will never regret taking this at \$325, as I know if you could see them, you would grab them at 500. When you consider what they do, their riding don't cost any more than Orrin Davenport and wife or the Ledgetts, as they do a great acrobatic act. Cable me at once, as I am holding these people."

Joe Hodgini Riding Troupe

Joe Hodgini, brother of Minnie Rooney and Hettie McCree and cousin of Albert Hodgini and Madame Adele Bedini, came to this country from England in the winter of 1908-09 and was apprenticed to Albert

Hodgini to learn bareback riding. He developed as a deft and graceful principal rider and eventually specialized in acrobatic comedy.

After six years on Ringling Bros. (1910-1915), Hodgini was on Gollmar Bros. (1916), John Robinson's (1917-1922), Sells Floto (1923, 1924) and for three years on indoor circuses and at parks, fairs and Shrine dates (1925-1927). In the meanwhile Etta Tybell, his wife, had appeared on the family act as early as 1919 and their two sons, Joe, Jr. and Tom, were introduced to riding at a very early age.

By 1925, at the New York Hippodrome, Joe Hodgini was copying the Hanneford act with falling trousers and the feigned chair throwing bit that scared front row spectators. There were then two women and four men in the Hodgini troupe and it provided sufficient entertainment for big time engagements. On Sells Floto in 1923 Joe Hodgini, Albert Hodgini and the Hobsons had each presented a big Indian riding number in connection with Buf-

The Hodgini Troupe on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1937. Left to right, Ethel Freeman, Freddie Freeman, Tommy Hodgini, Jr, Joe Hodgini, Rosie Walle and Mrs. Joe Hodgini. Pfening Archives.



falo Bill's Wild West. This Indian act, along with the comedy riding, now became a standard feature of Hodgini's presentations.

He was next engaged by Robbins Bros. (1928, 1929, 1931) and Downie Bros. (1930, 1938). In the following decade his troupe was on a succession of shows: Gorman Bros. (1934), Cole Bros. (1935, 1943, 1944) and Walter L. Main (1936, 1937). On Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1937 he was the central figure in the Davenport-Hodgini Troupe. Orrin Davenport's name appeared because he was the equestrian director although he did no riding. The other members of the troupe, in addition to Joe Hodgini, were Ethel and Freddie Freeman, Etta and Tommy Hodgini and Rose Wallett.

Other circuses on which the Joe Hodgini family performed were; Parker & Watts (1939), Bud Anderson (1941), Polack Bros. (1942) and Sparks (1947). He closed his riding career on Bailey Bros. in 1948.

Over the years a number of noted riders appeared with the Hodgini Family. Among them were Howard Bryant Montgomery (1939, 1931), Victoria Davenport (1929), Lulu and Dorothy Davenport (1935), Nettie Dill and Cecil Lowande (1921), Mamie Lowanda (1925), James MacCammon (1920-



Rosa Rosalind is shown doing a somersault while on the Sells-Floto Circus in 1915. Pfening Archives.

1925), Joe Marvello (1928), Clara Masters (1919), Irene Montgomery (1920), Mary Rickman (1928, 1931), John Smith (1920, 1921), Freddie and Ethel Freeman (1937, 1944), Rose Wallett (1937), James Rieffenach (1944), and Corinne Hodgini Dears (1944).

Beginning in 1950 Joe Hodgini and his wife presented dog acts and dog pony acts on Capell Bros. followed by engagements at parks, fairs and Shrine shows (1951-1953, 1956, 1958-1964), T.V.'s Super Circus, Hamid-Morton

((1955) and Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey 1969 until 1972. Joe and his wife Hanna were superintendents of the men's and ladies' wardrobes, respectively, on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Joe Hodgini had come full circle to the same organization, in name at least, on which he had begun some sixty years before.

Rosa Rosalind (1890-1950)

During the period 1910 to 1920 Rosa Rosalind's work as a female somersault rider, including the full backward somersault from one horse to another, was second only to that of the great May Wirth. Rosa was described as one of the most picturesque and sensational performers of her kind in America. Most of her short career was spent in the center ring of either the Sells-Floto Circus or the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circuis. Except for a few strokes of fate, her contributions would have been better recognized than they were. Unfortunately, she lacked the image of youthful genius that was possessed by May Wirth and she passed from the circus arena after only a short time at the top of her fame.

A fuller treatment of Rosa Rosalind's performing career is given in the article "Rosa Rosaland (Rosalind)," *Bandwagon*, November-December 1980 by J. D. Draper.

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RINGLING-BARNUM BULLDOGS

By Bill Rhodes

THE EARLY USE OF TRUCKS

Early advances in the development of the motor truck, concurrent with that of the automobile, made it inevitable that the larger circuses would try trucks as a means of moving their equipment, replacing horses.

The first such use by a major railroad circus was the Knox Tractor on Sells-Floto in 1915. It was purchased, used, in mid-season from an Ohio municipal fire department where it had formerly been used to propel a hook-and-ladder. The Knox Motors Co. had been founded in 1901 by Walter Knox and became an early leader in the manufacture of heavy trucks. The success of Knox was due, in part, to an invention of a Knox designer, Charles Martin, who patented the Martin Rocking Fifth Wheel in 1909. This device permitted the front of a heavy wagon to rest on the rear of a truck chassis, which at least doubled the load carrying capacity of the truck. Thus Martin became the inventor of the semi tractor-trailer rigs that clutter the highways of today, and Knox Motors the manufacturer of the first fifth wheel equipped truck. For a time the fifth wheel models were marketed under the Knox-Martin name, and were called tractors rather than trucks. In 1913 Martin left Knox to form his own company and the name, Knox Tractor, was used on their vehicles thereafter.

In the heyday of the horse, a good drayman could back his wagon up to a loading dock, then swing his team sideways to a position at right angles to the wagon without moving the wagon away from the dock. With a four or six horse team, such a maneuver was both necessary and difficult, because the team could not be left standing ahead of the wagon to block the street. When Knox introduced the fifth wheel tractor, they anticipated the same problem, so the Knox-Martin tractors were of the tricycle type with a single front wheel out in front of the radiator. This wheel was pivoted from directly above, much

like a bicycle, and could be turned to a right angle position to jackknife the tractor when loading and not block the narrow streets of early eastern cities.

The first two Sells-Floto Knox tractors were of this type and must have been an inconvenience to load on the train since they would have required a third run and extra cross plates to accommodate the wheel on the centerline of the unit.

These first Knoxes had wooden water tanks installed by Sells-Floto, replacing the fifth wheels. They thus introduced the use of the dual purpose tank which transported water and also increased adhesive weight on the drive wheels. Hand pumps were provided to fill and empty the tanks when needed. These were as unpopular with the workmen as the wheel in the middle.



One of the original Knox tractors on Sells-Floto Circus around 1915. Pfening Archives.

In 1915 Knox began production of a tractor with a conventional four wheel arrangement which was found to be more stable when making sharp turns and when operating on rough ground. Several of these four wheelers were used by major circuses, three being on Hagenbeck-Wallace as late as 1935. But the new conventional front axle presented a new problem. It was forged with a deep Vee drop in the center for crankcase clearance, which in turn caused decreased ground clearance under

the axle. They would catch on stumps, rocks, railroad switches, stakes and other obstacles that the old straight axle circus wagons would roll right over. Bent front springs were the frequent result of operation on rough lots and railroad tracks. The circus men called this "turning the axle" and a trip to the blacksmith was needed to get things back in alignment. Because of this, drivers were forbidden to take trucks of any kind off the streets except for unusually smooth grassy lots, even though Mack and other types did not have an axle problem. Eventually, as confidence in Mack increased, the restriction was forgotten.

The early 4-wheel Knox Tractors were in many ways similar to the first Mack Bulldogs which replaced them with large four cylinder engines, 3-speed transmissions and dual chain drive. The brakes on both were on the jackshaft which gave them the mechanical advantage of the chain drive ratio, a welcome boost in braking in days when power brakes were unknown. Knox enjoyed an early but brief popularity pulling fire apparatus originally designed to be horse drawn, but were soon replaced by newer specialized fire fighting equipment built by Mack and others. In fact an old circus driver said that so far as he knew all of the Knox tractors on American Circus Corporation shows were former fire department units.

Knox tractors continued to enjoy popularity as heavy hauling vehicles, having the distinction of being the first tank recovery vehicles in World War I, but the company, along with many early truck builders, was destined not to survive long after the war.

During the war the Army purchased a vast number of trucks for military use in France. Many of these were still in the states awaiting shipment when the war ended. In time most of them were declared surplus and sold. The postwar truck market was glutted with new or nearly new army trucks, forcing prices down and causing the financial ruin of

all but the most solidly financed truck manufacturers. Knox was finally one of the victims, producing its last tractor in 1922.

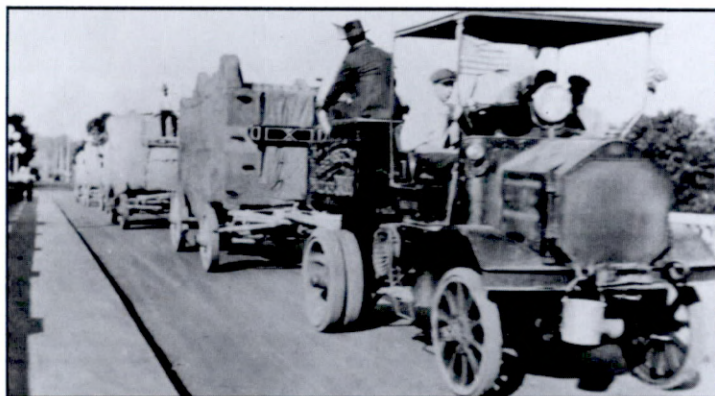
Most of the surplus trucks were of a custom military design known as "Liberty" trucks. They were rated at three tons and of conventional engine and drive arrangement, assembled from stock parts by more than a dozen companies. The Liberty trucks, identified by the letters USA at the top of the radiator, were popular with contractors and draymen, but so far as can be traced, none ever found service on a circus. There were plenty of them in the early 1920s, when the circus people were starting to buy trucks, and the prices were good, but the circuses selected other brands.

One reason might have been the brakes. Liberty trucks were a long time stopping with the driver standing on the brake pedal. Circus owners selected the Mack, Knox and Pierce Arrow units with the brakes operating through the drive chains. But the Liberty name did survive in the circus. As the tent shows and most carnivals began to convert to hard rubber type wheels in the 1930s and 1940s, many of the used wheels must have come from old army trucks, so the name "Liberty Wheels" was applied to all of them.

The acceptance of the heavy truck as a prime mover of wagons was not an overnight change with circus owners. Over the years, trucks became more reliable, skills of drivers and maintenance people improved, and confidence slowly increased. Meanwhile the horse continued to be the main source of traction.

There were several reasons for this. First was reliability. Horses had been moving the circus since the beginning. The makeup of Barnum's first circus train suggests that he was carrying enough horses to move it all over the road if railroad moves did not prove practical. Barnum and Coup did not initially trust the railroads, and later owners were similarly cautious with trucks. Horses did all the work on the lot, dry or muddy, where the big trucks could not always go. The full utilization of the truck had to wait for the adoption of the Caterpillar tractor. There was also the matter of pride. The draft horse teams were a status symbol for circus owners, much admired by the townspeople. And finally, those circuses which continued to parade had to have them.

Through the 1920s and most of the 1930s, trucks remained the secondary power source. Consequently most shows did not bother to equip their wagons with rear tow hooks which would allow them to be connected in long strings to be towed by trucks. The early trucks were not very speedy and were most efficiently used by towing several wagons, up to a flat car load, at a time. So the shows used spreader chains to connect the wagons.



This early four wheel Knox tractor was used by the Barnum & Bailey Circus during the 1918 season. It was on Ringling-Barnum in 1919. Pfening Archives.

These were Y shaped lengths of chain with hooks on the upper legs which were inserted in the rear bull rings of the leading wagon. The other leg, which usually included a large coil spring, connected to the gooseneck of the following wagon pole. The spring was to prevent straightening out the gooseneck if the truck jerked to load into motion. Connecting a string of wagons with spreader chains left a lot of slack in the lineup so the rear wagons had to have brakemen riding them to keep the string of wagons from jacking when the truck driver hit the brakes.

A truck prepared to tow a string of four or six wagons was virtually covered with spreader chains hanging across its rear. The helper and brakeman had to unhook all these, drag them back to the wagons and connect it all together. Arriving at the lot, or the crossing at night, they collected the chains and hung them on the rear of the truck for the bobtail run. All this was a lot of work and as trucks were used for more of the hauling wagons were modified with rear hitches and the wagon poles were fitted with a combination gooseneck and clevis which could connect to the rear of a truck or wagon, or a body pole as needed. This eliminated the slack in the wagon train, the wag-

ons would now track in line behind the truck without wandering, and the brakemen were not needed. The truck driver could do it all.

THE BULLDOG MACKS

Meanwhile, John Mack and his brothers Gus, Bill and Joe were enjoying an expanding business for their motor buses and in 1905, had moved their company from Brooklyn to a larger factory in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

They were now considering a line of heavy trucks in addition to the tour buses which had established the business. By 1915, while the Sells-Floto Circus was trying out the first Knox tractors, Mack introduced their third truck model, the Mack AC standard heavy truck. The model AC was destined to become a legend, not only as a prime mover of wagons on most of the large railroad circuses, but as the standard workhorse in construction, logging, mining, and general heavy hauling. It was introduced just in time for World War I, and many were exported to England where the British soldiers nicknamed them the "Bulldogs" because the shape of the Mack hood suggested the face of the tough little dog. Production of the AC was to continue for twenty-four years. The last ACs came off the line in the fall of 1938. No other American car or truck has matched this period of production for a single model.

The Bulldog Mack was, by contemporary standards, an advanced truck when it was introduced. The frame was heat treated alloy steel, giving exceptional strength for its size and weight. The crankcase was aluminum alloy, offering reduced weight compared to the cast iron usually specified. Special frame cross members were designed to reduce stress on the aluminum crankcase. The single massive gear box contained both the drive train gears and the differential, insuring alignment and good lubrication. Its location back on the jackshaft allowed larger than standard gears and shafts which accounts for the ability of the Macks to tow so many wagons for so many years in the lower gears with gear failure virtually unknown.

This arrangement was equivalent to the transaxle used on recent front wheel drive automobiles and considered a "modern" innovation. Head gasket failure was eliminated by eliminating the gaskets, cylinders and heads were cast in one piece. These were "pair cast-

ings," two cylinders per casting, and with the integral heads, had a smooth rounded contour. So the AC engine earned the name "Jug Head." After 1930, Mack considered gasket materials and casting techniques to be more reliable so the AC engine was redesigned with separate cylinder heads. These were of unusually thick, straight sided design, resembling tall pipes, so they were nicknamed the "High Hat" engines.

The engine was large for its time, displacing 471 cubic inches, but was started by hand cranking. Few men could crank a modern engine of that size, but the Mack had a compression of only 3.5, less than half that of most automobile engines today. So the old circus drivers pulled them over regularly by hand or foot. This was a simple effort on level ground, but up on a railroad flat car, standing on the coupler, or wedged in between the truck and the wagon in front of it, cranking could get tricky. Cole Bros. Circus welded a piece of I-beam on each side of the frames of their Macks like bumper guards. These were great for pushing wagons but must have made cranking the engine a difficult and dangerous job.

There was almost no room to get to the crank, and a kickback could jam the driver's arm against one of those I-Beams. Ringling bought the standard Mack bumper which was up away from the crank.

A chain drive is actually more efficient than gears, though you wouldn't believe it from the noise. It also offers a simple means of converting the truck from high speed service, such as fire apparatus, to medium duty, delivery or dump truck, to heavy hauling and towing. By simply changing the drive sprockets, speed is reduced and pulling power increased, or vice versa. This must have appealed to circus owners who, as we shall see, bought many of their trucks second hand. The Macks, and others with chain drives, could be converted to tractor service without major disassembly and expensive components to replace. Circuses always used the smallest front and the largest rear sprockets available, for maximum pulling power. With older solid tires, the engine governors were set at 1250 RPM and the top speed of the circus

truck was a blazing 12 MPH. In later years, with inflated tires, Mack increased the engine RPM to 1600, allowing a top speed of 15 MPH. For several seasons in the early 1940s, Ringling painted this data on the cabs of their Macks, "MPH-15." At the time this seemed to me to be only a warning to drivers not to speed with wagons in tow, any truck could go faster than that. I finally measured the rear wheels, counted sprocket teeth, and did some calculating. The result was 15.2 MPH, that was really the flat out top speed.

For dump truck and cement mixer service, with nothing being towed, the Bulldog could be geared up to a top speed of 20 MPH. Fire fighting equipment, using large front sprockets, could go much faster than that. At 1600 RPM the AC engine developed 74 horsepower, not impressive to a generation exposed to the advertising from auto manufacturers recent horsepower race. But consider that the old Bulldogs could run

gearing and 1600 RPM engine speed:

High	15 MPH
3rd	8.3
2nd	4.5
1st	2.3
REV.	2.0

From calculations which necessarily included some approximations, the tractive force in low gear was about 10,000 pounds, the same as a Cat D-4 tractor of the 1940s and 1950s. To use this much tractive effort a full tank of water and inflated tires would be needed, as well as decent pavement. The Ringling Macks which did not have tanks reportedly had scrap iron buried under the body floor to make up the needed weight. With this gearing, when driving around the lot and not towing wagons, the drivers could start in 3rd and shift once to high. The lower two gears weren't needed. On a level street a carload of wagons could be started in second. First was needed only for hills and mud.

The most visible change in the AC-4 was the radiator. Its location behind the engine helped give the truck its famous "Bulldog" appearance. The original design placed the entire cooling core inside the hood with a grill on each side for air circulation. The blade fan was in the center, driven by a belt which passed around the flywheel.

In those days, belt quality was fair to poor, and when one broke stringing a new one around that flywheel was no quick fix. As with the head gasket, Mack decided to eliminate the belt on the AC-4. Air flow was now provided by a big squirrel-cage fan bolted directly to the rim of the flywheel. It was advertised as the "Sorrocco Blower" and picked up air around the crankcase, discharging it upward and out the sides through the new "saddlebag" radiator cores. The inverted "U" shaped radiator was now exposed on the sides of the hood. The new cooling system, known as the Type V gave the AC-4 the final and best known hood configuration which remained unchanged for sixteen years.

However if the AC-4 had a weak point it was the Type V cooling system. Engine cooling was sufficient but the radiator was structurally weak. The cores would crack at the top where they joined the upper chamber. Water had to be replenished regularly after a leak started or it started to steam. A common practice in the last days of Mack ACs on circuses was to run a hose from the water tank to the radiator to keep it full. Ringling seemed to have a good truck shop and kept their radiators in good repair. Leaks were seldom seen.



Ringling-Barnum Mack AC 3 speed with stepped pickup body similar to that on AC No. 136. Season of 1921. All photos are from the author's collection unless otherwise noted.

at that power for hours if needed, while the advertised horsepower of "hot" cars could be sustained only a few minutes, and then usually under test lab conditions.

As years went by and the popularity of the Mack AC continued, the Mack engineers made improvements to eliminate minor problems in what was from the beginning a very reliable truck. The most obvious change came in 1922 when the AC-4 was offered to selected customers for evaluation. The added "4" identified the new four speed transmission. This provided a lower starting gear and was dictated by the wide use of the AC as a heavy tractor for trailers and semi trailers. Evaluation results of the AC-4 must have impressed the Ringlings and they ordered their first one for the following season.

Speeds were as follows with circus



The oldest Ringling AC 4, No. 136 with roof added to the forward half of the body. Season of 1943,

But Cole Bros. tried putty, which never sealed anything, and their trucks boiled regularly.

In the long history of the AC, Mack continued to make changes: larger 6 cylinder engines, live axles in place of chains, tandem rear bogies to name a few. The AC model designation was changed for some. But Ringling and other circus owners concentrated on the AC-4, for it served their needs well. Ringling's first AC-4 survived 36 seasons on the road, logging more miles and more wagons moved than we could estimate.

As Mack made changes in production Bulldogs Ringling also improved their fleet. In 1935 the AC-4s, which now numbered six, were converted to inflated tires, replacing the solid rubber tires previously used. The two remaining Pierce-Arrows were still on hard rubber since they were not to see many more seasons.

The next change was tested in 1940, conversion to Diesel power. Two Cummins H series truck engines were purchased, a six cylinder and a similar four cylinder. The six was installed in the White menagerie canvas truck No. 253, replacing the original gas engine. The four was installed in Mack tank truck No. 137. So far reasons for the new engines are a matter of speculation. The White engine was new in 1937 and should not have been ready for replacement. Parts for the AC-4, both new and used, were still available, so the engine could have been overhauled, if that were needed. This leaves us with the war situation in Europe, and the eventual entry of the United States in the war. There would be far fewer restrictions on diesel fuel than on gasoline. It is likely that the Ringling management considered this and decided to try a conversion. Another less compelling benefit was fuel consumption. The Cummins Diesels would get by on about half the

quantity of fuel that the Macks required. Although smaller, 448 cubic inches, than the AC engines, they were much more efficient with a compression of 18.75. The converted Mack performed well and by 1942 nine of the Bulldogs had Cummins engines.

The Cummins engines also meant no more hand cranking. No man alive could crank against that compression. The driver had only to give the hand plunger on the dash a couple of strokes to build fuel pressure and hit the starter. Cummins kicked off easier than most gas engines of that day. Electric starting meant a good electrical system, and at last headlights that let the driver see where the truck was headed at night. Diesel engines produce no vacuum so power brake systems could not be used. The Cummins engines came with air compressors as standard equipment. Air brakes were installed on the Ringling Bulldogs. Initially they were on the jackshaft as direct replacements for the foot brakes, but they were too powerful for operation through the chains and caused chain damage.

The Ringling mechanics reversed the brake systems applying the air to the emergency drums at the wheels, and linking the emergency brake lever to the jackshaft brakes. This arrangement worked well and continued in use for the remaining years of the trucks.

The diesel conversion of the AC Macks was probably not a Ringling exclusive as many Cummins powered Bulldogs were seen on the New York City docks during the 1940s and early 1950s.

The final change in the Ringling fleet came in 1943 when only the diesel ACs were carried on the road. That year the mufflers were removed and



Mack No. 236 in 1950, with fully enclosed body for tires and other truck department supplies.

overhead exhaust pipes were installed behind the cabs. Those with a good ear noticed a change in the classic Mack sound in some of the trucks the previous two seasons, when mufflers were used. But now loud exhaust noise and black smoke left no doubt that the engines were different. The exhaust change was probably dictated by a war time switch to No. 2 diesel fuel, which produced a lot of black smoke.

The rebuilding of heavy trucks was not new to the circus business. The Peru shops of the American Circus Corporation were reportedly the best anywhere and had done major reconstruction on several occasions. An old driver told the story of two Knox tractors that were considered beyond repair. Knox had folded and parts were not available. At Peru the two Knox tractors were completely disassembled, down to the last nut and bolt. The parts were spread on the shop floor in an orderly manner and inspected. The best single set of parts were selected and a Knox tractor was assembled from them. It ran a couple more seasons. Not the best overhaul practice, but it saved the cost of one replacement truck.

The former Ringling No. 136 on Royal American Shows in 1957 with a different body.





Ringling Bulldog No. 137/237 during its last full season of 1947.

In time three Knox tractors remained among the trucks of the Corporation, all with engines beyond repair. The other components of the trucks were serviceable so the Peru shop obtained three Continental engines similar to the original Knox engines and installed them. This involved modifying the frames and extending the hoods, since the Continentals were longer. Junkyard cabs were also added. The "modernized" Knoxes had a different profile compared to the factory version, but they ran well and were the ones remaining on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus through 1935.

One was equipped with a powerful winch overhanging the rear of the frame, and a large strap iron radiator guard in the front. These were insurance for hills on the way to the lot. The specially equipped Knox would stay at the hill and push or pull wagons to the top, assisting the truck or horse team to the lot. Down hill it would chain on to the rear and retard the wagon with the truck brakes. Drag shoes were needed only on the steepest hills. The Knox brakes were on the jackshaft outboard of the chain sprockets so they could be large and had unrestricted ventilation, a good combination when easing one

Mack FT No. 237 with the tank from AC No. 137.

load after another down a hill. Some reviewers reported that Hagenbeck-Wallace had a Hug or Euclid truck. This is unlikely, probably a case of not recognizing the specially equipped Knox. Hug and Euclid were very large, intended for mining and earth moving, not regular highway service. They would be too wide to fit on a circus flat car.

Such records as exist of the trains of Ringling Bros. and of Barnum and Bailey before the combination show one automobile in 1916 on the Barnum show but no trucks until 1918. That season, in addition to the auto, there were three trucks. Barnum and Bailey carried one on the first section and two on the second section. Ringling Bros., when operated as a separate show, evidently had no trucks. The three Barnum trucks were carried to the combined shows in 1919 and remained through the 1923 season. A report of a fire in the Bridgeport winter quarters listed three "Mack" trucks destroyed, which accounts for these first three. But photographic evidence indicates that they were not all Macks. The one on the first section of the Barnum train certainly was. Several photographs dated 1918 show it to be a Mack AC of the earlier 3-speed version. It has a relatively long wheelbase, probably 156" with a stake bin behind the cab and a two hammer stake driver in the rear. It was also used to tow wagons as the photos illustrate. Other photos show one of the trucks on the second section to be a Knox winch tractor very similar to the one on Hagenbeck-Wallace years later. In fact the mounting of the winch is identical as far as the quality of the early pictures will allow comparison. The winch was most likely a standard

Knox accessory. The Knox had a low rectangular body, a box to carry spare parts, chains or other "iron" as did its counterpart on the Hagenbeck show. Lettering on the side advises the public that Barnum and Bailey had a tractor department. Mechanization had begun.

A 1921 photograph shows another Mack AC-3, speed truck with what Ringling describes as a "pickup" body. This is also a truck of about 156" wheelbase with a stepped body, high in the front, low in the rear. It could be the first Mack described with the stake driver removed and the body extended, or it could be the third truck. More photos are needed.

THE NEW MACKS

In 1923 the Ringling-Barnum show needed more trucks and Knox was out of business. By then the reputation of the AC-4 was becoming well established, so the show again turned to Mack. The first of the fleet that moved the show during the 1930s and 1940s was ordered from the Bridgeport Mack branch and delivered in March of 1923 in time for the body to be installed. The stepped pickup body on their 3-speed Mack must have been satisfactory so the new truck was fitted with a similar one. These were used to carry stakes which were piled high in the front section and could be easily pitched out by workmen standing in the lower section.

Differences in the two Macks are: wood spoke wheels on three speed and of course the Type V cooling system on the newer four speed. As ground rules for this history, the Ringling numbers assigned to the trucks in the late 1930s and early 1940s will be used as a basic reference, although different numbers may have been used in the 1920s and all were changed in the mid 1940s. This was done because the fleet was complete in 1939 and did not change for several years. The first AC-4 was number 136 and was a 156" stan-

Mack AC No. 235 picking up the center pole wagon from a D4 run Cat.





Former Ringling No. 135 on Royal American in 1954 with a large welding generator mounted on the body.



Mack LJ No. 235, the last of the new LJs in 1953 its first season.

dard dump type chassis. It was the longest of the Ringling AC-4s. Mack No. 136 was destined for a long and distinguished career, with two body changes along the way. In 1943 the high front end of the body was fully enclosed and No. 136 carried mechanics supplies. In 1950 a completely enclosed metal body was installed. A Cummins Diesel replaced the Mack Jug Head gas engine in 1942, changing the classic Mack sound, and you could now hear the driver release the air brakes. Every loading list available shows No. 136 on the first section where its 20 foot loading length could be better accommodated.

Old No. 136, later No. 236, served Ringling for 29 years, finally being removed from service after the 1951 season. In all those years it had performed many tasks, even hauling ice when the big top was air conditioned. The Ringling show sold it to the Royal American Shows railroad carnival, where it continued service from 1953 through 1959. The iron in those carnival rides was as heavy as anything the circus offered but the driver of No. 136 (now T-21) told me he could stay in high gear all the way if there were no grades to climb, and he was pulling three or four wagons on each trip. Royal American finally retired Mack No. 136, transferring the body to a Diamond T medium duty chassis. Old No. 136 was donated to the Ringling Museum of the Circus in Sarasota, Florida. It was sent to Tommy White in Jacksonville for restoration, but has now been returned to the Ringling Museum. We hope the work will be completed, it would be shame to let this historic truck go to the junk heap after surviving so long.

The next new Mack was ordered in 1925. By then Mack was catering to the semi trailer trade and offered a short 28 inch wheel base. Considering the flat car space to be saved, Ringling or-

dered one and it was delivered in March by the Bridgeport Mack branch. The first body was a low rectangular box about half the height of the cab. It could have been a water tank or a junk box, probably the junk box since the Macks usually did not get water tanks in the 1920s. Our reference number for this one is Ringling No. 137, after 1945 No. 237. In the early 1930s one of those tall water tanks with rounded upper edges was mounted on No. 137 and that was the configuration for the remainder of its years. The tank was built for another truck with a shorter cab-aft dimension and was mounted with a slight tilt forward to drain the water completely. This gave No. 137 an awkward but functional appearance. Towing wagons and delivering water No. 137 eventually logged more miles than the older No. 136. So it was the truck selected for the trial Diesel engine conversion in 1940. It continued in service through the 1948 season, but began to have mechanical problems that year. Ringling decided it would not finish the season and located a replacement at the Mack branch in Worcester, Massachusetts. The new truck was delivered there July 1, and the tank from the old AC was transferred. The old veteran was junked on the road.

The new No. 237 was a Mack FT, designed for heavy construction, mining, logging and other rough work. It had an oversized frame and radiator, high clearance fenders and chain drive. It was nearest thing to a Mack AC on the show in the 1950s. It also had the only gasoline engine, a Mack EN 510. Ringling would have preferred a diesel since their other new trucks were so powered, but had to take what was available as a replacement en route. The engine was as powerful as the diesels they bought in 1947, producing 158 horse power at 2400 RPM, but used nearly twice the fuel, and used gasoline which was much more expensive than diesel fuel. In all other respects the FT was a rugged and satisfactory truck and it did its share of the wagon towing and

lot sprinkling in the remaining tent show seasons. But with chain drive it was a rail show truck, not for over the road service. So when Ringling started playing buildings and stadiums in 1957 No. 237 did odd jobs around quarters. It allegedly shipped from Venice to Houston where the show had plans for a theme park at one time, and the trail ends there. It is no doubt junk by now.

The last of the new Macks owned by the Ringling show was selected by none other than the owner, John Ringling himself, at the New York automobile show in 1932. No doubt this was a publicity appearance, designed to give a prosperous image to both the circus and Mack Trucks in those depression years. John Ringling had decided that the show needed a wrecker and had the new truck equipped with a winch behind the cab and a fixed rail crane which overhung the rear of the truck by a couple of feet. There was a small box body under the rail which carried the gillie wagon some seasons. This truck was numbered No. 135, later No. 235, and carried the same crane and body until its last season, 1952. It was the only Bulldog on the show that season and was driven by "Cowboy" Ed Curry who chugged around in the old Mack wearing a big ten gallon hat as though he was proud of the twenty season veteran which could stay with the new trucks and tow its share of wagons.

The following winter No. 135 was stripped of its winch and crane and sold to Royal American Shows as a bare chassis. Royal American used it in 1953 with a welding generator in a low open body. The carnival later decided that another water tank was needed and had a tall rectangular tank built by a Tampa, Florida steel fabricator. The tank was mounted on No. 135, now T18-W, and this configuration was retained through 1958. The Mack was retired after that and the tank was transferred to a new International truck. This

tank had caused a lot of confusion among historians because it closely resembled the one on Ringling Mack No. 231. They could have been made by the same fabricator.

Close examination of sharp photographs of each will reveal that the Ringling tank is of tread plate, while the Royal unit is smooth. In 1967 Mack No. 135 was loaded on a flat car for the last time. Royal American carried it with them to their stand nearest to Baraboo, Wisconsin and there, donated it to the Circus World Museum. It is still in storage at the museum with no plans as yet announced to restore it. So the Circus World Museum has a rare opportunity to exhibit the last Mack AC in the Ringling-Barnum fleet, and the only one personally selected by John Ringling. A first class restoration would include the winch and crane.

AC No. 235 was replaced by LJ No. 235, new for the 1953 season. It was also a wrecker. It had an enclosed body for mechanics supplies with the crane inside. Only the end of the boom could be seen extending out the rear. This was the last of the new LJs added by Ringling. Like the other short LJs, it was converted to semi tractor service when the tent show days ended.

THE SPARKS TRUCKS

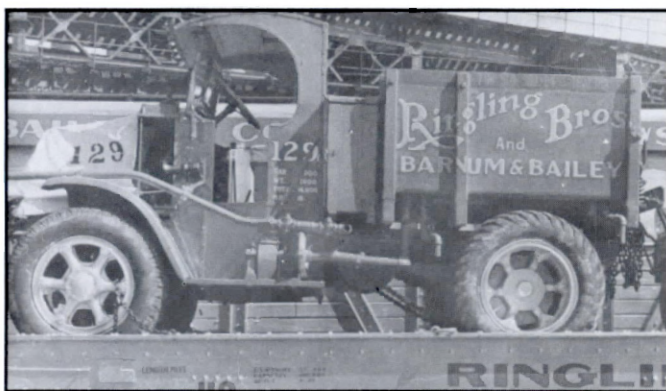
When the Ringling owned Sparks Circus ended its season in 1931 the train was moved to the Ringling Sarasota quarters. Due to poor business in the depression years, Sparks did not go out in 1932. The Sparks equipment was available to be absorbed into the Ringling show as needed. The two Mack AC-4s from Sparks were adopted. The first of these was given Ringling No. 129 and was a 1925 model. Sparks had installed a short rectangular water tank with the center line of the tank only slightly ahead of the center line of the rear axle. This was a good arrangement for maximum adhesive

weight on the driving wheels, but left a gap between the tank and the cab. Sparks had mounted a wood box in the gap for water hose, tools, hydrant valves or other hardware. The box was low and the driver had a fair amount of rear view over the tank. Ringling must have

liked the configuration. They left it alone for the life of No. 129 and used it on another truck. This was one of two ACs not converted to diesel, so when the show was reduced in size in 1943 due to war conditions No. 129 was stored in Sarasota. In 1945 another water truck was needed, so No. 129 was dusted off, tuned up and placed in service again, now renumbered No. 239. It went on tour again in 1946 but that was the last year. New Mack LJ No. 239 was purchased for the 1947 season. Ringling was trying the LJ as a replacement for the now very old fleet of ACs, and was staying with the six cylinder version of the Cummins four that had served so well during the war years in the Bulldogs.

Mack had been producing a diesel version of their EN series engines using a licensed combustion chamber design called the Mack-Lanova Diesel. It ran smoothly with a clean exhaust, but you might need two sets of batteries to start it if the weather was cool. Cummins HB engines, already in use by the show, tended to knock and smoke after accumulating a little mileage, but started on the first kick and had proved that they could take the punishment of lugging long strings of wagons. The new Mack worked out well and remained on the show through the last season under canvas. After that it went out as a semi for the building and stadium dates.

Sparks bought their second Mack in 1926. It was delivered in February by



Former Sparks Mack now Ringling No. 129 still using the Sparks tank.

the Atlanta Mack branch. Sparks installed a low wood body with an open top and a tail gate. Ringling decided that the Sparks body did not suit their needs and replaced it with a closed wood body with a roof and doors. It was used to carry oil, grease and parts. This was Ringling No. 128. This and the other Sparks truck No. 129 had the shortest wheel bases in the Ringling fleet, a 120 inch option offered by Mack. The closed body remained on No. 128 only a couple of seasons, it was then traded for a tall round edged tank from a Pierce-Arrow. With a single tool box on the top of the tanks, No. 128 and No. 137 were very similar in appearance. A diesel engine was installed in No. 128 for the 1942 tour and it was renumbered 238 in 1945. It remained in service through the 1949 season. For 1950 the tall tank was remounted on a new Mack LJ, No. 238. This was the first of the tank trucks to have the new Cummins HRB engine, an improved version of the one ordered on LJ No. 239. It was a slightly larger engine, 745 cubic inches, producing 165 horse power. The HRB engine was the engine used in most of

Ringling Mack LJ No. 238 with the tank from Bulldog No. 128. "Employees are forbidden to ride on this wagon or wagon pole."





Bulldog No. 132/232 working at the runs loading a cookhouse wagon.

Ringling's new Mack LJs. Like No. 239, No. 238 finished its days hauling semis to building dates.

THE PIERCE-ARROW TRUCKS

John Ringling had a preference for Pierce-Arrow automobiles for his personal use, and this may have led to the use of their trucks by the circus. Favoritism or not, Pierce did enjoy a reputation as a quality truck. Ringling historians have known of three Pierces for some time, but old records recently added to the Pfening Archives indicate that there were four. Their numbers were 132 through 135. Pierces No. 134 and 132 were purchased in 1925 and 1926, the others in prior years, probably 1923 and 1924. Probably all were new. Around 1930 No. 132, 133 and 134 were fitted with steel water tanks with rounded upper edges while No. 135 and the Macks had low bodies which could have been tanks of earlier design or junk boxes. A few years later the tanks on No. 132 and 134 were traded to Macks No. 128 and 137. The reason for this was probably tied to the fortunes of the Pierce-Arrow Company. Their products were expensive, especially the automobiles, and the depression economy offered little market for limousines. By 1933 regular production had ceased and the line of commercial vehicles was sold to Studebaker, who dropped some of the line and sold the remainder to White Trucks where the Pierce designed components soon disappeared. Confronted with an impending parts shortage the Ringling show wanted to get as many more seasons as possible, so eliminated the extra mileage logged hauling water around the lot.

In 1932 Ringling had available the two Mack ACs from Sparks and the new Mack wrecker. They decided to send their oldest Pierce, No. 135, to the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, increasing that fleet to three Knoxes, a new Mack

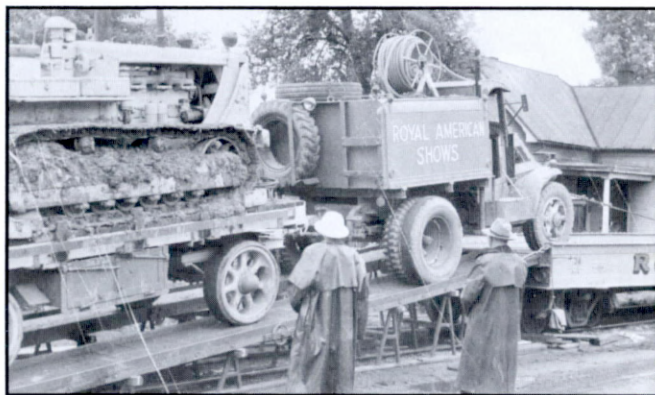
AC4, and the Pierce-Arrow. The three remaining Pierces were eventually replaced with used Mack ACs.

The Pierces lacked the formidable appearance of the Macks but they were powerful, with twin cams and four valves per cylinder. The latter feature is hailed as a great advance in the current generation of new autos, but was on Ringling trucks of the 1920s.

THE SECOND HAND MACKS

The first of the used Mack ACs purchased by Ringling was delivered to the Sarasota quarters in March 1935 by the Jacksonville Mack branch. A water tank formerly on a Pierce-Arrow was installed, and the No. 133 from the replaced Pierce was assigned. The tank was one of three made by or for Ringling with radiused upper edges. This one was longer with less height than the other two, which were evidently identical. The others were on Macks

Ringling Mack No. 132 restored at the Circus World Museum. David Blanchfield is in the cab.



Former Ringling No. 132 on Royal American with the tank from No. 133.

No. 128 and No. 137. Mack No. 133 was a 1926 model and had two owners prior to the circus. Like the other used Macks, it originally had a wheel base of 156 inches and was cut down to approximately 130 inches when the circus purchased it. It is not known whether Ringling or the Jacksonville Mack branch did the modification. According to Mack experts this was not a difficult operation for a well equipped shop, so either could have done it. Model builders who have been measuring wheel bases and not getting any of the standard ones may now breathe a sigh of relief since there could have been anything among these cut down trucks. Remember also that the radius rods were adjustable to tension the chains so the standard wheel bases were only approximate. Which end did they cut off? In one case it was the front end although it could apparently be either.

Mack No. 133 was converted to diesel power in 1942 and renumbered 233 in 1945. It remained in service through the 1950 season. That summer it was plagued with recurring problems with sticking valves and unloaded the show many mornings running on three cylinders. Since the ACs were getting old and being replaced with new Mack LJs, a decision was made not to overhaul the engine, and No. 233 was junked. The tank and pump were transferred to No. 232, which was in better mechanical shape.

The replacement of Pierce No. 133 with the Mack AC after the 1934 season while Hagenbeck-Wallace was still in business offers a chance for interesting speculation. What happened to the Pierce? If it followed Pierce No. 135 to Hagenbeck, it would then be the two Pierces rather than two Knoxes that were used to make one truck for the 1935 season. Several facts support this idea. The 1935 date would better coincide with the time the old driver



One of the Ringling used Mack AC 4s, No. 133/233.

who told the story worked for the show than a probable date for salvaging old Knox tractors, probably before 1930. The surviving Knox tractors had been repowered several years earlier and other could have been salvaged in the same way at the same time if that were needed. And last, the reconstruction of one essentially worn out truck from two would be a depression era contingency done with the knowledge that the show would not tour more than one or two more seasons. The Ringling owners would be reluctant to invest in better trucks, or even new engines, with the future of Hagenbeck-Wallace in doubt, and 1935 was its last season. If true, this theory along with information provided later covers the fate of all four Pierces.

Mack AC No. 132, later 232, was one of two used trucks purchased in 1936 to replace the remaining Pierce-Arrows. It was a 1926 model. The original owner was the International Oxygen Company. A closed wood body from a Pierce was installed and used for tools, spare wheels and parts. This truck normally remained at the crossing at night and pulled strings of wagons

In the late 1930s and early 1940s No. 134 and No. 132 were nearly identical.



Mack No. 134/234 with a stake driver on Ringling in 1947. Kitto photo.

up the runs, shuttling back and forth beside the run flat in low gear. With decent pavement along side the track it could handle several wagons at a time and did not use a block. In 1951 a Caterpillar D-6 tractor with its tracks replaced by wheels was added as a pullup tractor, replacing No. 232. With the No. 233 tank now installed, No. 232 was renumbered 233 and so toured in its last Ringling season in 1951. For 1952 a new Mack LJ with a new rectangular tank was numbered 233. Old No. 132 was sold to Royal American Shows with the tank from No. 133 still on it, and worked on Royal until 1958. The tank was transferred to an International truck, and later to a late model Mack, lasting as long as the Royal remained as a railroad show. Royal donated No. 132 to the Circus World Museum where it was restored and is operated regularly. Restoration included another tank and a Mack AC gas engine of the "High Hat" type so that it runs and sounds like it did in the 1930s.

Another used truck purchased in 1936 was numbered 134 and it received the other closed wood body from the Pierce of the same number. It was a 1925 model originally sold to a Dover, New Jersey Company. Except for the door arrangements on the bodies No. 132 and No. 134 were identical. They remained so until 1946 when the power stake driver from wagon No. 107 was remounted on Mack No. 134, renumbered 234. The advantage to this was

that the truck with the stake driver could proceed quickly to the lot and begin to drive stakes immediately without waiting for horses, elephants or a tractor to arrive, one of which would be needed to move a wagon mounted driver. The delay

could be substantial if the lot was several miles from the crossing. But there were disadvantages to mounting the driver on No. 234. The Mack would still have to wait for help if the lot was soft because they were no good in mud. The truck was not available for towing wagons until the stakes were driven. By then the train would be nearly unloaded. Finally Mack No. 239 was back in service, still powered with the hand crank gas engine. It would seem to make more sense to mount the stake driver on No. 239 and leave the diesel powered No. 234 with air brakes and other modern features for pulling wagons. The answer may be that a wreck or fire occurred and No. 234 had to be rebuilt any way. Two serial numbers turn up when this truck is traced, suggesting that parts from another truck may have been used to rebuild it. In any case No. 234 continued to drive stakes most of the time until the 1949 season when Ringling bought a war surplus White half track and transferred the stake driver to that chassis. The half track was well adapted to muddy lots and eliminated delays that the Mack had caused in bad weather. An enclosed steel body evidently made from a surplus army trailer was mounted on No. 234 and it returned to wagon towing service. The new body didn't do much for the looks of the Mack. It was too long and overhung the rear of the frame by a couple of feet causing the rear springs to flatten. The truck always looked overloaded in its latter years. It continued in service through the 1950 season and was then retired. It too was sold to Royal American Shows. Ringling replaced it in 1951 with a new Mack LJ with the Cummins HRB engine and the tall water tank from AC No. 231. Bulldog No. 234 ended its long career with the 1959 season on Royal and was then donated to the Ringling Museum of the Circus. The museum eventually had plans to re-

store it to operating condition, but like Mack No. 136 the work was last reported halted for lack of funds.

Evidently the work of shortening Macks No. 132 and No. 134 in the spring of 1936 took longer than expected and the Pierce-Arrows were sent north on the train from winter quarters. The two modified Macks were finally delivered at the Brooklyn stand and the Pierces were sold to a junk dealer. The Macks were sold by the Jacksonville branch on April 28, a very late date to go on the road, which indicates that the Mack dealer modified the frames.

THE BARNES TRUCKS

Following the labor strike in 1938 much of the Ringling equipment was combined with the Ringling owned Al G. Barnes Circus for the remainder of the season. The whole operation returned to the Sarasota quarters and the Al G. Barnes show did not tour in 1939. So, like the closing of Sparks, much of the Barnes equipment was absorbed into the Ringling show. Barnes had three Mack ACs and all were added to the Ringling fleet in 1939. This brought the total to eleven Bulldogs and the number of heavy trucks on the show to a peak of fifteen. The Barnes trucks all had water tanks and inflated tires and needed only repainting. The tanks were 7/8 inch redwood paneling in a steel frame and proved to be quite durable, surviving seven or eight seasons on the Ringling show before being replaced by steel tanks.

The oldest of the Barnes trucks was Mack No. 138. It was a 1925 model AC originally sold by the Milwaukee Mack branch and was picked up second hand by Barnes in 1937. Since Barnes was Ringling owned by then this was consistent with their policy of buying inexpensive used Mack ACs. The used truck was the last of the three owned by Barnes and was No. 3 on that show.

Former Barnes Mack added to the Ringling fleet in 1939, No. 125. Fred Heatley collection.

The tank on No. 138 was shallow compared to the other Barnes trucks, or for that matter the other Ringling tanks, but two high boxes mounted length wise on each side atop the tank gave it a high profile. It resembled the Cole Bros. Macks of the early 1940s. It was not converted to diesel and served only four seasons on the Ringling show, 1939 to 1942. It was stored at the Sarasota quarters and became a source of parts for the other Bulldogs from 1943 on. After World War II with new trucks available and many of its own key parts missing, old No. 138 was dragged out in the weeds with the junk wagons in the back of the quarters. It was eventually towed over to the Ringling Museum, but was again stored outdoors. No attempt was made to preserve or exhibit it. At one of these points of outdoor "storage" it was involved in a brush fire and at last viewing was badly deteriorated.

Barnes No. 1 Mack AC was purchased new in April 1927 from the Los Angeles Mack branch. In its earlier years on the Barnes show it had a winch and rail crane somewhat similar to the one on Ringling No. 135. This was replaced by a wood tank in the early 1930s. A small tool box was placed on top on the drivers side directly behind the cab. Ringling eventually replaced the little tool box with the two long ones from No. 138. Barnes No. 1 became Ringling No. 125. Then in 1946 the wood tank was leaking too much so a new tall steel tank was constructed for it and the truck was renumbered 231. This tank was a prototype of the other new tanks to be built for the Mack LJs to be purchased as replacements for the Bulldogs. Mack No. 125 and 231 continued with Ringling through the 1950



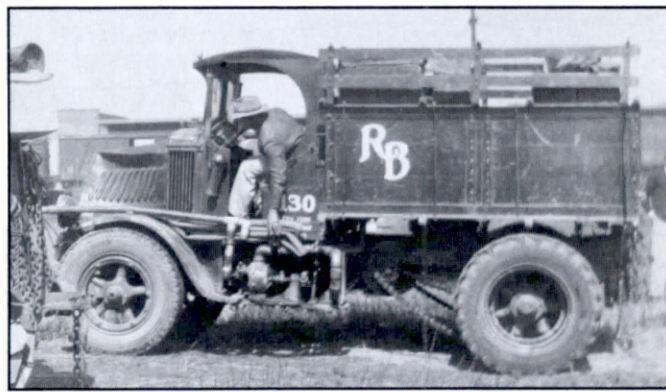
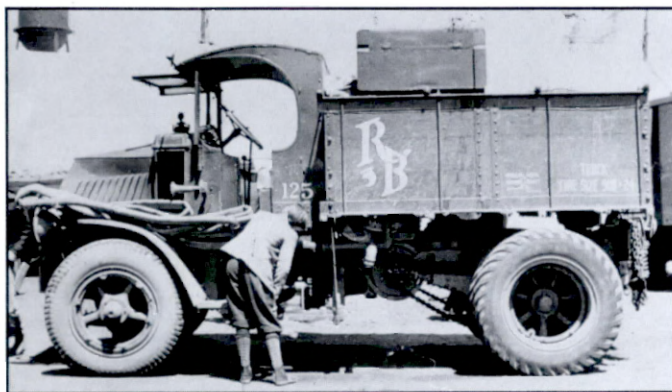
Ringling Mack No. 125/231 with a new steel water tank in 1947.

season. Its tank was mounted on new LJ No. 234 for the 1951 season.

Barnes No. 2 was also purchased from the Los Angeles Mack branch in February 1929. It became Ringling No. 130, later 230. The tanks on Macks No. 125 and 130 were virtually identical except for accessories on the tops. Where No. 125 had the small box, No. 130 had rails along the edges so that spare tires, water hose, buckets or whatever could be stacked on top and not slide off. A Cummins HB diesel engine was installed in 1941. The wood tank was due for replacement in 1947, and since No. 239 was being retired the tank and storage box behind the cab from No. 239 were transferred to No. 230. After that No. 230 could be confused with No. 239 except for the diesel exhaust and a slightly longer wheel base. It served through the 1951 season and was retired with neither the tank or the number continued on a new truck.

This article has covered eleven Mack AC trucks used by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, all very familiar to historians of the Greatest Show on Earth. But David Blanchfield, "the one and only Deacon," who supervised the Ringling truck and tractor fleet during

Ringling No. 130 with the wooden water tank installed by the Barnes show.



those years always insisted that there were twelve. He should have known, but the number and configuration of that twelfth Mack remains a mystery to this writer. There are tales of one numbered 245 or 246, but no photos or records have turned up to prove its existence. Blanchfield did not recall the numbers of the Macks well, and they were of course changed over the years. There is one bit of evidence of the missing truck.

When I photographed truck No. 138 scrapped in the Sarasota quarters, another old junked AC was near it in the same row of old equipment. No number was legible on the cab of the other truck. At the time of the picture I thought it was the other Mack which was stored in 1943 and not diesel converted. That assumption was wrong as proved by another photo showing No. 239 at the same time in much better shape, since it was used years later. The companion to No. 138 appears to have been junked at about the same time, 1942. That would have to be true since 1942 was the last season all of the known eleven trucks were used. Addition of another Mack after that would not bring the total to twelve, and they would not likely buy another truck with No. 138 available. It is possible that the Ringling show added another used Mack AC in 1939 or 1940 when they became fully mechanized and found that it was more than needed so, set it aside as a source of parts. If so, sooner or later someone will turn up a picture of it which shows the number and body style.

In 1942 Ringling issued a press release telling how they were coping with rationing of tires and gasoline. It mentioned that when unloading each truck made four trips from the runs to the lot, and the same when loading at night. A Mack could haul a flat car load of wagons if the street conditions were suitable. This gives a rule of thumb for the number of trucks needed, one for each four flat cars. The 1942 train consisted of 19 flats and 5 trucks on the first section and 33 flats and 10 trucks on the second section.

This works out about right allowing for the fact that four of the trucks were occupied loading and unloading canvas and would probably not make four trips during a move. That same year Cole Bros. Circus moved on eleven flats and carried four Mack ACs, allowing longer hauls from the train to the lot. They increased to fifteen flats in 1946 with the same number of trucks, now about the same ratio as Ringling. But new Cole

management in 1949 tried to move sixteen flats of wagons with only three trucks, two big Mack LJs and a medium duty six cylinder Chevrolet. These were not enough and Cole had to hire local trucks for long hauls.

In 1941 Ringling changed the color of their Mack Bulldogs from the traditional red to green, along with the Caterpillar tractors and cookhouse wagons. The big canvas trucks remained red. That same year Cole Bros. used a varied color scheme on their four Macks, #1 was the usual red, #2 was sky blue, #3 was orange and #4 was white. Cole was probably just using available paint, but several more interesting explanations of the Ringling change have been passed on. One says that the show offered the cookhouse, trucks and tractors to the government in case of a war time emergency.



In Sarasota quarters this old Mack AC chassis was behind No. 138. It has the original gas engine. This could be the missing twelfth Bulldog.

This equipment was consequently painted something close to the standard Army drab (they were true green, not olive drab). In return the circus would be issued ration coupons for fuel and tires in event of war. This may have been true, during the war years Ringling seemed to have an ample supply of military mud-grip tires while Cole Bros. left quarters with virtually no tread on the truck tires, carrying a load of spares which were no better. They must have changed tires regularly all season, getting by on what they could buy second hand. Another tale of the Ringling green is that customers arriving for the evening performance might see the cookhouse being loaded and conclude that they were not going to see the whole show, "part of it had already left." If what they saw being moved were a color other than the traditional circus red, they might not have reached this conclusion. This one ex-

plains the return to green cookhouse wagons in later years. The Bulldogs were green only two seasons, 1941 and 1942. Mack FT 237 had a green cab and a red tank in its first half season on the road in 1948. On the road they had enough to do remounting the tank and pump. Repainting waited for the 1949 season. Other than these exceptions, so far as it is known, the Ringling Macks were red.

When considering the length of service of some trucks used by circuses and the amount of effort the shows expended to keep them running the reasons are better understood when the circus business is compared to local industry. Most truck users operate all year and keep their down time to an absolute minimum. Most have major service done commercially and pay full or premium shop rates for the work. It soon becomes more economical to replace equipment than to rebuild it. On the other hand the circus had several months of automatic down time each winter with no service loss. They learned, a hundred years ago, to be as independent of local service as possible, to keep moving and to avoid being scalped. So the circuses were well equipped to do mechanical repairs and had expert people to do the work. Labor costs even got cheaper in the winter off-season.

We remember the old Macks, and the others, because there were relatively few of them and they lasted so long. No one seems to admire or keep track of the trucks on modern tent shows. There are too many, and they soon disappear.

The author wishes to acknowledge the valuable assistance of the following who have generously offered access to their own records, data and historical accounts of circus operations. Without such generous help this history could not have been written. They are: David Blanchfield, Albert Conover, Fred Heatley, Don Kidder, Edward Lester, Robert MacDougall, Fred D. Pfening III, Richard Reynolds, Gus Taliaferro, James Tyrell and Tommy White.

For additional reading on the subject the following are recommended. The books *Mack, Living Legend of the Highway* and *Bulldog*, both by John B. Montville, published by Aztex Corporation, Tucson, Arizona. The March-April 1980 *Bandwagon* contained a well illustrated article by Fred D. Pfening, Jr. titled "Mack Bulldogs, The Power Behind the Circus," with a follow-up article appearing in the March-April 1981 issue.

SHORT SKETCHES OF FORMER SHOWS

Pawnee Bros. and Don Robinson Circuses

Season of 1951

By Joseph T. Bradbury

At many times in circus history there would be a flurry of new shows going on the road, most of them being rather small and nearly always short lived. One such period was immediately after World War I to take advantage of the soaring economy. Another was in the mid 1930s when the great depression which had killed off so many circuses eased up somewhat creating the impression among potential showmen it was time to get back into the game. Then in the latter stages of World War II, 1945 in particular, there was a rash of new shows hitting the road. A few years later, 1951, again saw a number of new, quite small, circuses going out.

The pre-Korean War business recession began in 1949 and then continued through most of 1950, some six months after the war began in June. But business picked up dramatically in the early months of 1951 which led showmen to believe a good season was coming up. There were a number of new circuses ready to take the place of some of those who faltered in 1950. However, there was a difference. Leaving the circus scene had been two large railers,

Pawnee Bros. Circus sleeper bus on the lot in Warner Robbins, Georgia April 1, 1951.



Don Robinson
*Ameri-Congo Combined
Animal Circus*

Permanent Address:
Route 3, Box 275,
Sarasota, Fla.

ENROUTE

PAWNEE BROS.

IN CARE OF
THE
BILLBOARD
PUB.
CO.

ENROUTE



P. O. BOX 523
PUNTA GORDA
FLORIDA

The 1951 Pawnee Bros. Circus letterhead was printed in dark blue with circus in red. The 1951 Don Robinson Ameri-Congo Combined Animal Circus letterhead. Don Robinson is black and the rest of title is red as is the clown. All illustrations are from the author's collection.

Cole Bros. and Dailey Bros. which cut the total number of railroad circuses going out in 1951 to two, Clyde Beatty on fifteen cars, and Ringling-Barnum now down to only seventy cars, some twenty less than carried only two years earlier in 1949. The new shows being framed in the early weeks of 1951 were quite small, often called "bantam" circuses in the trade publications. They were all motorized in the ten to fifteen truck class. Two of these new shows

were Pawnee Bros. and Don Robinson and they provide the subject matter for this edition of Short Sketches.

They started as separate circuses but in June were combined into a single show and their story is inter-woven with several other bantam shows.

Pawnee Bros. was framed in quarters at Punta Gorda, Florida by Ralph E. Green who had a carnival background. He had spent some years with the King Reid Shows and had been with Royal American in 1950.

The first notice of the new show came in the form of an advertisement in the December 30, 1950 *Billboard*. The ad read, "WANT, WANT, WANT. For long season opening in the South. Family acts doing two or more. Tommy Bently, answer, man and wife for circus cooks, man must drive. Bob and Goldie answer. One combination biller who can drive. One or two good clowns. Hap Kelly answer. Boss canvasman, good seat man, all answer, stating lowest salary in first letter. Working men, come on. Winter quarters now open. Best cookhouse on road. Drunks, chasers and promoters stay where you are, we don't need you. All answer to Ralph E. Green, Pawnee Bros. Circus, P. O. Box 523, Punta Gorda, Florida."

The Pawnee Bros. Circus No. 1 office semi in Warner Robbins, Georgia.





Pawnee Bros. Circus semi No. 3 carried horses and ponies.

The new show assembled approximately ten vehicles which included semis, straight bed trucks, pickups and former buses. The big top was an eighty foot round with three forties that had been used by Dales Bros. Circus in 1950. The entire top was completely renovated for use on the new show. A feature was the use of neon lighting inside the top.

Pawnee Bros. opened on March 3 in Punta Gorda and the March 17, 1951 *Billboard* covered the event. The article said that fair business was encountered at the initial stand and the show then moved out for nineteen days in Florida before heading northward.

The reviewer spotted eight well decorated show owned trucks and the lot was neatened by extensive use of tanbark. The program ran ninety minutes. Spec on opening day was led by the local high school band. On the road the show was to use an air calliope for music with Tommy Comstock at the keyboard.

The article went on to say that Bill DeArment was equestrian director and the sideshow was managed by George DeSilva. The sideshow went on at Punta Gorda without platforms or caged animals, both of which Green was adding soon. One truck was on the advance.

The 1951 Pawnee Bros. performance was listed as follows:

Semi No. 4, props and rigging, on Pawnee Bros. lot in Warner Robbins, Georgia.

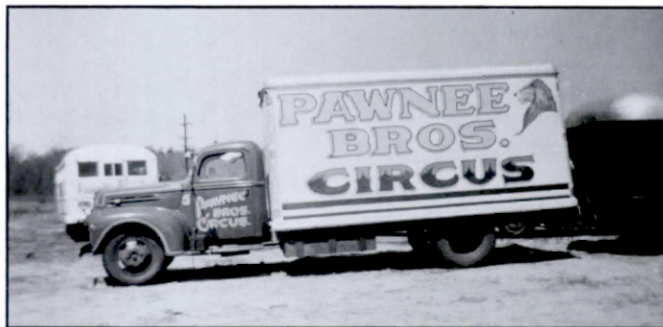
Display 1, Tournament; 2, riding monkey; 3, Slim Girard; 4, clowns, led by Billy Winters; 5, Ruth Stevens and hurdle pony; 6, McLeans, trampoline; 7, clown walk-around; 8, Virginia Girard, chair balancing; 9, clowns; 10, concert announcement; 11, clowns; 12, Barth and Meier, acro novelty; 13, pony drill; 14, clown walk-around; 15, menage; 16, Juggling Girards; 17, clowns; 18, concert announcement; 19, Barth and Meier, high perch; and 20, Eddie Frisco, semi-slack wire.

Although not mentioned in the review the aftershow featured Tex Ranger and his Movie Pals and was wild west oriented.

The sideshow lineup was listed as follows: Ted Moriarity, fire and Hindu torture; George Foster, blind banjo player; Lois Murphy's hillbillies; La To Ka, fat boy and Eddie Frisco, impalement.

A week later the show advertised in the *Billboard*: "Wanted due to enlarging show very much interested in animal acts. Capt. Harrell, Capt. Eugene Christy, contact at once. Ed Weideman, get in touch. State your lowest price or best deal. Ralph E. Green, Pawnee Bros. Circus." Two dates in Georgia were given, Jesup, March 23 and Ludowici, March 24.

Nothing appeared in the *Billboard* concerning Pawnee Bros. after its opening until late March when a notice appeared advising that Ed Hill had been named general agent, succeeding W. E. Vandergrif. Hill formerly was agent for Frank Ketrow's Animal Oddities. The article advised the show was now in Georgia and that business was re-



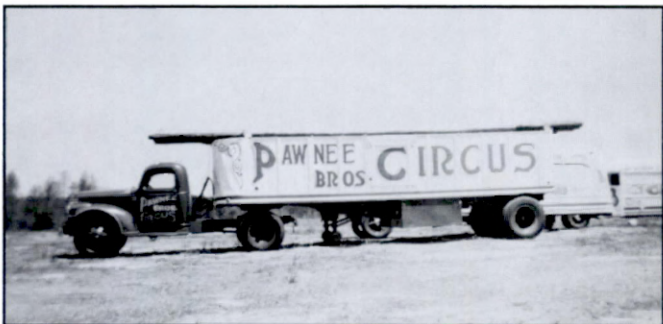
Pawnee Bros. Circus truck No. 5 carried props.

ported weak at several recent Florida stands.

It was quite by accident I saw the Pawnee Bros. show on the lot at Warner Robbins, Georgia on April 1. Performances were not scheduled until Monday, the following day.

The story begins when I was visiting the King Bros. Circus quarters at Central City Park, Macon, Georgia on the Sunday before the show was scheduled to begin its season the next Saturday. In the early afternoon the Pawnee Bros. air calliope truck drove up which was a surprise as I had no inkling that show was anywhere near. Upon inquiry I learned the show was at Warner Robbins, a short fifteen miles south of Macon. My wife and I immediately got into our car and drove down to investigate. We had no trouble locating the lot in Warner Robbins where the Pawnee Bros. trucks were parked. However, there was no activity at all going on, nothing had been unloaded. There were several men gathered outside the office truck but other than that the personnel were either sleeping or had gone into town. We stayed a half hour walking around and photographing the various vehicles which were neatly painted and decorated. Color scheme for the truck bodies was white with blue lettering and red trim or red lettering and blue trim. On the spot I made the following list of vehicles.

Pawnee Bros. Circus semi No. 12 carried poles and canvas.





Panel concession truck of Pawnee Bros. Circus, April 1, 1951.

- No. 1 (semi) Office, tickets.
- No. 3 (semi) Horses and ponies.
- No. 5 (s.b.) Props.
- No. 12 (semi) Canvas, big top.
- No. - (semi) Seats.
- No. 4 (semi) Props, rigging.
- No. - (bus) Cookhouse.
- No. - (bus) Sleeper.
- No. - (panel truck) Concessions.
- No. - (pickup) Air calliope.

I could see no elephant and since none was listed in the opening review the show probably had none at this stage of the route.

No canvas had been unloaded so I have no idea of the size or the shape of the sideshow, nor the layout and composition of the midway.

The motorized equipment looked very attractive, with the cabs lettered as well as the bodies. I didn't record the color schemes of the cabs but photos show they were dark, either blue or red, probably the latter if I remember correctly.

After leaving Warner Robbins Pawnee Bros. was reported to have played Gordon, Georgia on April 5 and Clarksville the 26th. No other date was mentioned in the *Billboard* until the show had left Georgia, crossing the Carolinas, and was in Kenbridge, Virginia on May 5.

The Don Robinson Circus was framed at quarters on Lockwoodridge Road in Sarasota, Florida in the early weeks of 1951 by co-owners Howard Ingram

and Eddie Billetti. Ingram had operated the Ameri-Congo Animal Exhibition for the two prior seasons. The official title of the show appearing on the letterhead was "Don Robinson Ameri-Congo Combined Animal Circus."

Some of the vehicles were lettered with the full title, while others had only the Don Robinson name. Eddie Billetti had been on Hagen Bros. in 1950 and formally had the Billetti Family high wire act. The act had been featured with several circuses including Sparks in 1931, the final year on the road under Ringling-Barnum ownership and management. Ingram had originally framed his animal show with the intention of later switching to a circus operation.

The canvas which had been used as the big top for the Ameri-Congo Animal show was set up at quarters to house animals and equipment and also served as a work area. It was a long, narrow sausage shaped tent using six center poles. Ameri-Congo was one of two rather good sized outfits of this type which operated in the immediate post World War II years. Smaller shows of the same general type were quite common during this period. Some of them were part of carnival midways, while others worked on their own. The larger ones usually had a small elephant plus a number of lead stock type animals, donkeys, llamas, buffalo and bison. Along with these were portable cages with a variety of beasts up to the size of mountain lions, and any number of domestic and wild varmits. Floyd King operated a wild life show for a few years prior to returning to circus

Pawnee Bros. air calliope at Central City Park, Macon, Georgia winter quarters of King Bros. Circus, April 1, 1951.

ownership in 1946 with King Bros. The larger shows charged an entrance admission, while some of the smallies with carnivals had no fee to get in but upon leaving the patron was asked to volunteer a donation, with most of them forking over the suggested quarter.

The first mention of the new Don Robinson show in the *Billboard* came in the March 3, 1951 issue in the form of an advertisement. It read: "Don Robinson Ameri-Congo Animal Circus, wants to hear from five or six piece band with own transportation. Open middle April. Working men who drive trucks, useful circus people. Cal Townsend, Bill Vinnso, contact Eddie Billetti, Route 3, Box 275, Sarasota, Florida or Howard Ingram."

An article in the March 17 *Billboard* said that Howard Ingram had reported the Don Robinson show had signed the LaBelle Troupe, Bedell Troupe, Hal Crider and family and Dan Riley's animals. Ingram further stated the show was to open April 14 with a sixty foot round top using a forty and a fifty; a forty by one hundred foot sideshow housing animals, a pit show, a cookhouse and a sleeping top. Ten show owned trucks were scheduled to move the organization.

Don Robinson Circus semi carrying canvas, rigging and props at Villa Rica, Georgia.





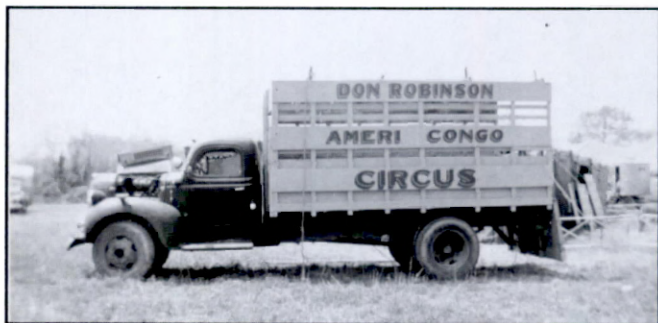
Don Robinson pole canvas semi on the lot April 26, 1951.

The article continued noting that Riley would have his Gorilla show as the pit attraction and would work his two trained mules, twenty-four dogs and chimp in the performance. Art Eldridge was working animals daily. Eddie Billetti was in charge of building rigging. New seat lumber was expected that week. Mrs. Billetti was in charge of wardrobe and purchasing.

The piece concluded by noting other preparations included the overhauling of light plants by a Tampa firm; ordering paper and heralds from Central Show Print, Mason City, Iowa and buying new trappings for bulls and horses.

The new show purchased from Ringling-Barnum the sideshow top which that show had used in 1950. It was a sixty foot round top with four middle pieces about thirty feet. The entire tent and sidewall was in good condition. There was a report printed in *Billboard* that Don Robinson also purchased two truck loads of props from Ringling-Barnum and that painters who worked on Ringling equipment also decorated the Robinson trucks. The vehicles were painted yellow and red with blue lettering. However, a later report was published in which Billetti denied the Ringling painters had worked on his equipment and the show had purchased two loads of props. He said the show had purchased the former Ringling-Barnum sideshow tent only.

The No. 3 Don Robinson Circus truck carried pit show props.



On March 12 a storm hit the Don Robinson Sarasota quarters. There were strong, gale size winds, accompanied by heavy rains and the Ameri-Congo 1950 big top was damaged. However, it was believed it was repaired sufficiently to be carried on the road by the show and used as the sideshow-menagerie top.

The March 31, 1951 *Billboard* carried this advertisement: "Ingram and Billetti present Don Robinson Ameri-Congo Circus. Open April 14. All people engaged please acknowledge. Performers report Pelham, Georgia April 12 for rehearsal. Others report Sarasota, Florida April 9. Fleet leaves April 10. Want fast sign painter for banners, bannerman who can get results. Want party with stock for wild west concert. Cooks join at once. Seatman, canvasman, Animal man etc. Man handle office. Place couple more family acts. Second man handle music. For sale forty by eighty bale ring top and poles. Winter quarters, Lockwoodridge Road, Sarasota, Florida. Howard Ingram or Eddie Billetti."

Evidently the show had given up the idea of using a small five or six piece band as wanted in an earlier advertisement and was now looking for a sound man to handle the music for the performance. The tent advertised for sale was probably an old one which Ingram had formerly used with his animal exhibit.

An informative article dated March 31, Sarasota, Florida in the *Billboard* reported that the billing crew of the Don Robinson Ameri-Congo Circus would open April 3 under the direction of J. W. Foster. Paper had arrived from

The concession semi carried the show's full title, Don Robinson Ameri-Congo Circus Combined.

Central Show Print and that a herald would be used that season. General agent Clarence Auskins had the show booked well in advance. First stand to be Pelham, Georgia, April 14.

The story noted that Howard Ingram had announced that the show was to operate under auspices at all spots and reported early advance sale reports were satisfactory. Roy B. Jones, former James E. Strates manager and now with the Pepsi-Cola Company of New York, and the show had signed an exclusive drink sales contract. Show was to carry advertising stunts for the bottling company that season, Ingram stated.

Ingram and Billetti said the equipment was nearly ready for the road. H. D. Talbott was chief mechanic, Dan Riley had added trucks for his animal acts. Art Eldridge continued working the animals daily. The elephant act worked the Sailor Circus at the Sarasota high school. Among those Ingram reported to have signed with the show were Leo Cogazzo, pit show; Roba Collins and LeRoy Sanders, sideshow; Anna Nelson, aerials and Chick Yale, table rock.

Meanwhile, as preparations were going on in Sarasota converting a former animal exhibit into the new Don Robinson Circus over in the eastern part

The Don Robinson big top on the Villa Rica, Georgia lot. This had been the sideshow top of Ringling-Barnum in 1950.





Elephant, Lasca, on the Don Robinson lot in Villa Rica, Georgia.

of Florida at the Navy Air Base north of DeLand an almost duplicate process was taking place.

The Pan American Animal Exhibit which had been operated for five seasons, 1946 to 1950, by W. F. Duggan was being converted into a circus which would be titled Hagen-Wallace. Duggan had died in December 1950 but his son, W. F. (Dub) Duggan, Jr. said that plans would continue to frame the new circus despite his father's death. He told the trade publications eight pieces of rolling equipment had been purchased and as early as January 1951 they were going through the paint shops. An order for new canvas had been placed with the Central Canvas Company, Kansas City, Missouri. The spread would include a forty by eighty sideshow top and an eighty foot big top with one forty and two thirties. Central Show Print would supply most of the paper.

Circus activity was high in Florida during the early weeks of 1951. In addition to the three new shows being framed, Pawnee Bros., Don Robinson and Hagen-Wallace, three more circuses were wintering in the state. Another small show, Beers-Barnes was in quarters in the Miami area while in Ft. Myers the medium sized Rogers Bros., in the twenty-five truck class, owned by Si Rubens was wintering. During several weeks of the winter of 1950-1951 Rubens put out a smaller show, about ten trucks, titled Seers Bros. Circus which played throughout Florida. However, the really big news was coming from the Ringling-Barnum quarters in Sarasota where Cecil B. DeMille and his crew were filming The Greatest Show on Earth. Truly the early weeks of 1951 in the Sunshine State was "hog heaven" for circus fans.

The choice of the Don Robinson title makes for interesting speculation, as well as that for Hagen-Wallace. In the

former no doubt it was hoped the natives in the small hamlets and towns the show would play might remember the name Robinson being connected with circuses in the past. Of course there had once been both John Robinson and a Dan Robinson who had circuses on the road. Local residents in the deep south spots could recall old John Robinson alright even though that show last toured in 1930 but no way Dan Robinson as he went

too far back in circus history and his name was not as associated with Dixie as was John.

Whether or not these near titles of famous shows of the past carried any real weight for the 1951 bantams is debatable. With this in mind let me relate an incident which happened to me the previous summer. My wife and I were driving from Chicago to Detroit and into Canada in June of 1950. We spent the night in Kalamazoo, Michigan, then early the next day drove on to Battle Creek and were on the lot by 9 A.M. awaiting the arrival of the Hagen Bros. Circus, a medium sized motorized show. A goodly crowd was on hand waiting for the show. On the scene was a rather loud mouthed local "know it all" who told everyone who would listen to him that the show would be arriving in the rail yards of the Grand Trunk and should hit the lot shortly. I told him this was only a truck show and that it was coming in from a certain city where it had played yesterday. He was unconvinced. He remembered this was a large railroad circus which he had seen in the past. Soon several Hagen Bros. trucks came on the lot and the loud mouth quietly disappeared.

Don Robinson opened as scheduled at Pelham, Georgia on April 14 then continued in that state playing Blakely, Shellman, Buena Vista, Talbottom, Manchester, Greenville, Bowdon, Bremen, Tallapoosa and Villa Rica.

Georgia during several weeks in March and April had circuses running about all over the place. In the race were Don Robinson, Pawnee Bros., Rogers Bros. and Beers-Barnes. Hagen-Wallace had wisely been routed more westerly, in Alabama, as the shows worked their way northward from their Florida homes. This gang up of shows didn't help any of them according to Gene Christian, veteran general agent, of Beers-Barnes who was interviewed in the May 12, 1951 *Billboard*.

Christian said Beers-Barnes opened a

winner at Vienna, Georgia, April 17 but the two weeks that followed gave spotty business. He said weak territory was in Southern Georgia where the weather was bad. Fayetteville and Hogansville were good but twelve other dates were poor. Christian said opposition between Beers-Barnes and Don Robinson at Buena Vista and Blakely soured business for both. Robinson played three days ahead of Beers-Barnes. Christian pointed out that his route could not be changed because of the large towns contracted by Robinson, Pawnee Bros. and Rogers Bros. circuses. By the end of April, he said, the four shows had

Newspaper ad used by the Don Robinson show for the Monticello, Georgia stand in July.

Coming . . . Monticello

GEORGIA.

1 Day Only

3 p.m. & 8 p.m.

WED. - JULY 18

Sponsored by

Kiwanis Club

GRANDER THAN EVER... ANNUAL TOUR

Don Robinson
AMERI-CONGO
ANIMAL
CIRCUS
COMBINED

Lasca.
WORLD'S
SMALLEST
PERFORMING
ELEPHANT

CLOWN BAND
LIBERTY HORSES
TRAINED ANIMALS
ACROBATS.....and
WIRE WALKERS.....
NEW and DARING

PRICES LOWER THAN EVER...

fanned out and there was little likelihood of route conflicts in the next several weeks. Beers-Barnes started the year with a new big top, an eighty with three thirties.

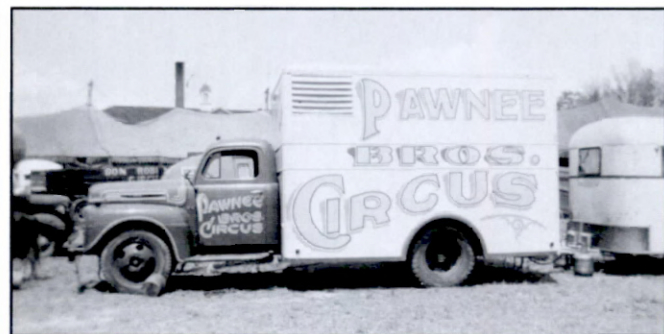
Evidently Don Robinson was experiencing a shortage of help when this ad appeared in the April 28, 1951 *Billboard* shortly into the new season:

"Want. Bannerman, join on wire; banner painter; Trudy Stevens, wire; seatman, riggers, camel back seatman; Paul (Hammerhead) Lucas, Managry Red, contact Hitler; boss canvasman, seat butchers, standman. Want animal men; man to work elephant and stock, capable of breaking. Side show talker and ticket seller. Don Robinson Circus." Several Georgia dates were listed.

I was aware that Don Robinson would play Villa Rica, Georgia on April 26, 1951. The town is about thirty-five miles west of Atlanta on Highway 78 going toward Birmingham. I left my Atlanta office and drove directly to Villa Rica and arrived on the show lot about 4 P.M. It was set up just off the main street about a block on the grounds of the local elementary school. [Later on this same lot I would catch Hoxie Bros. in the 1960s and the John Lewis version of Lewis Bros. in the 1970s.]

The matinee had already started and the midway was deserted when I arrived. Moments after I got there armed with my camera and notebooks, possibly thinking I was from the press, Eddie Billetti came up to me and introduced himself and I told him I was a circus fan from Atlanta. He welcomed me to the show then took me inside where I caught the rest of the performance. I complimented him on the neat appearance of the show in general and in particular the big top. It was then he told me it had been the Ringling-Barnum sideshow the previous year. I recorded in my notes the top was a sixty foot

Tex Ranger's truck on the Don Robinson lot. The truck was painted with the Pawnee Bros. title, where Ranger had been earlier in the season.



round with four thirties. Performance was given in the center ring and on two stages on either side.

Seating, eight high bleacher type, was located on only one side, the top being too narrow to allow seating on both sides. Music was by recordings on a pretty fair sound system. Since my interest in those days was primarily directed to the physical set-up of a circus I neglected to record in detail the performance lineup. However, I do recall it consisted primarily of trained horses, ponies, monkeys, dogs and a chimpanzee. There were several wild west type numbers and Tex Ranger put on the aftershow. A single elephant, a young, fairly small bull, was nicely trained and concluded the performance.

After the show I spent considerable time on the lot, making notes, preparing a list of vehicles and photographing everything in sight. In making the truck list I also put down the color scheme of most of the units. Some were painted yellow with blue lettering and red trim while others were red with silver lettering and blue trim. Some trucks carried the full title Don Robinson Ameri-Congo Animal Circus, while others had only the Don Robinson name. All were very neatly painted and lettered.

Of particular interest were two trucks painted in the Pawnee Bros. color scheme. One had that show's title on the side while one was lettered "Tex Ranger and His Movie Pals." Both were used by Ranger.

The truck list was as follows:

- No. 3 Pit show props (yellow)
- No. 4 Light plant, sleeper (yellow)
- No. 5 Pit show, canvas and poles (yellow)
- No. 8 Two wheeled trailer, birds and monkeys (yellow)
- No. - Semi, poles and canvas (red)
- No. - Props
- No. - Props, dogs and ponies
- No. - Semi, seats (red)
- No. - Semi, Canvas, rigging (red)
- No. - Tickets, office (red)
- No. - Semi, concessions, cookhouse (red)
- No. - Sound truck



The Robinson show's office and ticket wagon. The stake drivers in left foreground.

No.- Bus, Tex Ranger, sleeper (white)
No.- Tex Ranger horse and pony (white, Pawnee Bros. lettering)

In addition to the big top, other canvas on the lot included a six pole pit show and a small cookhouse.

There were a number of animals staked out on the midway. These included one elephant, "Laska," five years old; four donkeys, six ponies and eight horses. The show also had a chimpanzee and in the pit show were a number of small caged animals.

Although I didn't make any particular note of it, I'm positive I saw some of the show's billing paper, one sheet and dates posted in the windows of local merchants as well as cards tacked to utility poles. It was somewhat unusual to see the two vehicles on the lot painted in Pawnee Bros. color scheme but it was obvious sometime earlier Tex Ranger had left Pawnee and come to join Don Robinson, the exact date I don't know.

I did not meet Howard Ingram while I was on the lot in Villa Rica. Everything looked calm on the surface and little did I know that some two weeks later the two partners would part company.

After playing Villa Rica the show was at Buchanan the following day and after an off Sunday was in Rockmart, Georgia on April 29. No information can be found on the next week of dates but on May 8 the show was way up in the north Georgia mountains at Clayton. Still in the extreme northern part of the state the following stand was at Helen and on May 10 the show was in Young Harris. The later was the final stand for the show under the partnership of Ingram and Billetti. There was a disagreement between the co-owners and they parted company, dividing the property. It is not known how the partnership was organized, who owned what, or how the settlement was made. The *Billboard* ran a short notice in the June 9 issue stating the show had ap-

parently closed in Young Harris for several days. Several sources reported that business for the show had been unusually good in North Georgia but that earlier stands had not been profitable. The partners took legal action against each other and the case was to be heard in court soon, the article continued, but efforts to contact the partners were not successful. In any event both Ingram and Billetti then went their different ways, and as mentioned, each taking some of the property.

Billetti went to Tennessee and joined James D. Forrest in operating Fay Bros. Circus, another of the many bantam circuses of 1951. Reports on that show are very scarce in the *Billboard*. It didn't last but a few weeks. One note said that a chimp belonging to Dan Riley (apparently the same one who had earlier been on Don Robinson) injured a policeman during a performance of Fay Bros. at Spring City, Tennessee on June 10. The show moved on to Oliver Springs, but Riley was detained. Near Tracy City, Tennessee a Fay Bros. truck was wrecked.

The July 14, 1951 *Billboard* told of the final chapter of the show in an article headed "Fay Bros. Circus collapses in Tennessee." The story noted that the circus owned by James D. Forrest and Eddie Billetti folded at Rutledge, Tennessee on June 30 after moving from Maynardville. George (Slim) Griffin, agent for the show, reported that some of the personnel remained in Rutledge. Nothing further appeared on the whereabouts or activities of Eddie Billetti for the remainder of the year.

Meanwhile one notice said that Howard Ingram resumed in a few days after the break-up of Don Robinson in Young Harris, touring his part of the equipment under the old Ameri-Congo Animal Exhibit title as evidently the pit show tent and animals remained his property. However, even if this did oc-

The Don Robinson seat truck on the Villa Rica, Georgia lot in 1951.



Tex Ranger's bus on Don Robinson. The unit was painted in the Pawnee Bros. color scheme.

cur it was short lived because of other events to take place soon.

Earlier we left Pawnee Bros. at Kenbridge, Virginia on May 5. After that stand the show did not continue on its scheduled route but instead laid off for two days during which time it was reported in the *Billboard* that Pawnee Bros. had folded in Kenbridge and disbanded after playing to generally weak business since its opening. The report proved to be incorrect, as what happened, Pawnee Bros. merely abandoned its eastern Carolina projected route for one further westward involving North Carolina and Virginia. This new route being the one that had been abandoned by the Don Robinson Circus.

An informative article in the June 9, 1951 *Billboard* tried to clarify the confusion of the prior couple of weeks. The piece told of the move and new route being followed by the Pawnee show and that business for the show had been strong of late. Staffers in addition to Ralph Green included Kit Noble, announcer; Carroll Bush, tickets; Mary Green, concessions; Eddie Exline, lights and mechanic and Everett Daniels, concert.

The one hour and forty five minute Pawnee performance included Sue Daniels, pony; Eddie Exline, ponies, monks and liberty horses; the Daniels, whips; Daniels' bear act; Marce and Myers, perch and ladders; Margaret Forkum, three fighting lions; Wilsons,

dogs; Everret Daniels, high school horses and mules and Billy Winters, producing clown with three men. The concert ran 35 minutes with wild west turns and Daniels' horse, The Great Speckled Bird.

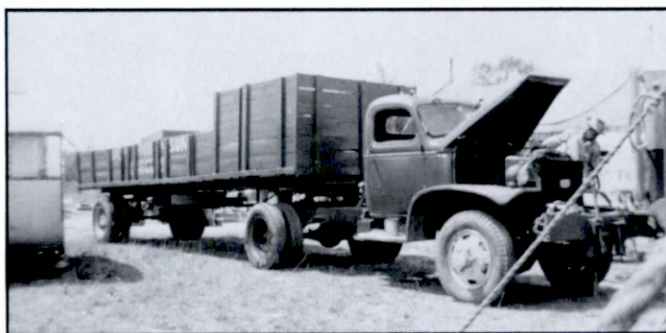
A final note said that Capt. Bill Forkum, who had joined after closing with Horne Bros. reported one of his lions had four cubs recently.

The former Don Robinson dates then being played by Pawnee Bros. were never specified. Only two published stands scheduled by the Robinson show to be played after Young Harris, Georgia were in North Carolina at Haynesville on May 11 and Franklin on May 12. Then there was a break in any dates scheduled until June 25. No doubt the stands played by Pawnee had to be in the general area of western North Carolina.

Finally the July 17 *Billboard* cleared up the situation in an article headlined, "Pawnee, Robinson shows merge as bantams regroup at mid-year. Billetti starts Fay Bros., hits snag, Duggan organization quits Oklahoma for Carolinas." The report told the story of Fay Bros. It also mentioned that Hagen-Wallace had blown its old route after Claremore, Oklahoma and moved eastward fast after a run of weak takes. It was at Copper Hill, Tennessee June 23 and then was making king size jumps on its way to North Carolina to pick up a new route.

But the big story was that Pawnee Bros. and Don Robinson Ameri-Congo Animal Circus had combined and opened in North Carolina at Warrenton June 25 under the Don Robinson title. Ralph Green and Howard Ingram were now co-owners of the combination. The article stated that the show was using an eighty foot top with three thirties for the big top, and a forty with three thirties for the sideshow and menagerie.

Don Robinson pit show. This had been the big top of Howard Ingram's Ameri-Congo Animal Exhibit in 1950.





The Don Robinson cookhouse on the Villa Rica, Georgia lot in 1951.

Advance ticket sales and auspices were to be used.

The elephant and a sound truck was to supply downtown bally. Combination would mean that most of the acts were show-owned. This was expected to ease the labor shortage experienced earlier by the separate shows. Both staffs were to be retained. Green and Ingram were to remain back on the show.

There was still another "bantam" show involved in the new combination Pawnee-Robinson circus. Jimmy Winters brought to the show some concession equipment which had been acquired from the defunct Horne Bros. Circus. That show, was the remnants of what once had been The John Pawling Great London Circus of 1949. It had been owned by a prominent circus fan Harold J. Rumbaugh of Everett, Washington. Rumbaugh had been a partner with Floyd King in the operation of King Bros. Circus for the 1946-1947 seasons. King purchased Rumbaugh's interest following the 1947 season and a year later Rumbaugh bought the James M. Cole Circus. For its initial season in 1949 he changed the title to John Pawling and it was the CFA convention circus that year.

The severe 1949 business recession killed Rumbaugh's grand hopes for his new show. In 1950 the name was changed to Horne Bros. and it went downhill steadily. The show began the 1951 season using the Horne title in the deep southwest and then moved northward into Colorado. While in that state the show was leased to Clyde and William Newton and the title was changed to James Allen's Trained Animal Circus. It closed at Rocky Ford, Colorado on May 29. Soon after Clyde Newton had taken over and later laid out at Las Animas and Pueblo, Colorado for several days

before Rumbaugh took it to Everett, Washington.

The new Don Robinson combination played several more North Carolina dates and then moved into Tennessee on June 30 at Sevierville which was followed by Dandridge. On July 10 it was back in North Carolina at Maiden and immediately thereafter played Cherryville, Londale and Boiling Springs.

Three days are then missing from the route but evidently the show was moving southward rapidly during this time as it is next reported to have been at Winder, Georgia on July 17. This date was followed by Monticello, Aparta, Wrightsville and Soperton as the route carried it into middle Georgia.

cus was in Swainsboro, then Metter, Claxton, Statesboro, Millen, Wadley and Greensboro in an unbroken string of stands.

According to the *Billboard* published route Don Robinson after a few unnamed dates was next at Zebulon on August 21. Woodbury, Grantville, Franklin, Chipley, Hamilton, Lumkin, Richland, Ellaville and Oglethorpe followed. These were moderate sized towns, fairly close together meaning travel between stands didn't consume much time.

The first week of September found the show still on its Georgia route at Vienna, with Smithville, Leesburg, Edison, Leary and Arlington coming afterwards.


During this time absolutely nothing appeared concerning the show in the *Billboard*. There was an advertisement in the July 21 issue listing a series of "wants" but it ended with a rather curious notation.

The ad read as follows; "Don Robinson Circus wants to join now. Boss canvasman, circus cook, truck drivers, butchers, one more family act and other useful circus people." Five Georgia stands, July 17-21 were given. The advertisement ended, "Note I have no partners."

The ad leaves the reader to wonder if the "I" was Howard Ingram or Ralph Green. Since the Don Robinson title was continued in all probability it was Ingram. If the partners split, when it happened, or how it was settled is not known to the author.

Arlington, Georgia September 7 was the last stand in that state. The show then moved into Alabama where two dates were given in Columbia September 8 and Ashford September 9. Then the route ceases as does any further references to the show in trade publications. It can only be assumed that it probably closed shortly after the final stand listed and the equipment later either was

sold or retained by the owner for use in his further endeavors. Regardless of what might have been the final chapter in this story the circus titles of Don Robinson and Pawnee Bros. fade into history and are generally forgotten except by those, who like the author, have seen and photographed them. Their mention in Short Sketches at least preserves for posterity some illustrations on them, even if incomplete.

EXTRA  **EXTRA**

DON ROBINSON AMERI-CONGO

BIG 3-RING CIRCUS

STREAMLINED



CIRCUS DAYS HERE AGAIN!
The first of the Big Three Animals in the Ring!

A MAMMOTH AMUSEMENT COMBINING CIRCUS, MENAGERIE, HORSE SHOW and BEAUTIFUL EYE-THRILLING SPECTACLE. ONE COLOSSAL ULTRA MODERN PRESENTATION. THOUSANDS WHO HAVE WITNESSED THE PERFORMANCE HAVE BEEN ELATED WITH THE HUNDREDS OF BEWILDERING SIGHTS THAT GREET THEIR EAGER EYES!



A Show That Pleases the Entire Family. A Thousand Wonders. This is a Real Circus. A City of Laughter.



2 COMPLETE PERFORMANCES DAILY - Afternoon & Night
1 and 8 p.m. - Show Open 2 and 7 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.



WILL EXHIBIT AT -



BOX HOLDER LOCAL

ELK PARK, N. C. FRIDAY, MAY 25 1 DAY ONLY

ADMISSION REDUCED CHILDREN 50¢ - ADULTS 80¢

Front cover of the four page newspaper sized herald used by the Robinson show in 1951. It was printed by the Central Show Print of Mason City, Iowa and was mailed to the towns on the route from Mason City.

Playing Georgia in July and early August is somewhat unusual for circuses although some indeed have done it in the past at times. On August 5 the cir-

Antony Hippisley Cox

Circus fans will be saddened to learn of the death of the English author and historian Antony Hippisley Cox, at the age of seventy-five, on January 28, 1988. Mr. Cox was fond of remarking he was not a "scholar," but a journalist, and besides working at various times for such publications as the *London News Chronicle*, he was the author of scores of books and articles on a surprising range of topics. These included *Haunted Britain*, which he planned as a kind of "Shell Guide" to the supernatural lore of Great Britain; *The Book of the Sausage*, written in collaboration with his wife Araminta, herself an accomplished practitioner of the culinary art; and *Smuggling in the West Country*, an account of that interesting activity in a part of England he loved and knew well, since he resided for many years within walking distance of the picturesque coast of North Devon.

Above all, however, he was Britain's premier authority on the circus and its history, a subject he tirelessly promoted for nearly half a century—in lectures, exhibitions, articles, and books, most notably his classic work entitled *A Seat at the Circus*. Originally published in 1951, then revised for the Shoe String Press of Connecticut in 1980, this entertaining and at the same time highly informative book addresses the reader as though he or she were attending a circus performance, devoting separate chapters to the various acts one might expect to witness during the program, from the opening parade to voltige and equilibrists, and on through performing animals, daredevils, aerialists, jugglers, acrobats, clowns, and all the other numbers traditionally associated with the circus. One of the book's greatest merits is that it explains, in easily understood terms, how such acts are accomplished and their degrees of difficulty, thereby teaching the reader (or spectator) what to look for—a critical guide, in fact,



Antony Hippisley Cox. Photo by A. H. Saxon.

to a subject that to the uninitiated often appears chaotic and incapable of analysis. While following this original format, the author—despite his disavowal of being a "scholar"—provides the reader with plenty of history, some of it personal, as when he relates how, as an experiment, he once assembled and trained a group of common alley cats, which performed on music hall stages, in cabarets, and eventually in Ginnett's Circus under the amusing title "Coxe's Catrobbats."

In addition to frequently writing about and lecturing on the circus, Mr. Cox built a fine collection of books and ephemera on the subject, now preserved at the Theatre Museum in London's Covent Garden. At the time of his death he was working on a circus exhibition for the same institution, which is still scheduled to be held later this year. He also served for many years on the editorial board of *Theatre Notebook*, the journal of

the British Society for Theatre Research, and was responsible for organizing a highly publicized tightrope crossing of the Thames during the Festival of Britain in 1951. The artist was Elleano, the first man to accomplish this feat; but as Mr. Cox objectively pointed out, he had been preceded by a woman, Selina Young, ninety years earlier.

As a youth Mr. Cox studied architecture and for a while, until problems with his eyesight intervened, seemed destined for a career in the Royal Navy. He served with the last—first on a destroyer, then in naval intelligence—during World War II and at various periods was stationed in Washington and Paris. In 1956 he was recruited by Shell Oil for its public relations department. This position he filled with distinction for the next thirteen years, two of them spent in Iran, making many original contributions that are still recalled by his appreciative colleagues at Shell. A man of great wit, cosmopolitan charm, and boundless enthusiasm for whatever he or his many friends were working on, Mr. Cox was always eager to help the last, and often even strangers, in their research on the circus and other topics. The present writer benefitted from his advice and hospitality on many occasions and owes him no little debt of gratitude in the writing of his own works.

In the same month as his death the UNESCO *Courier* published an article by Mr. Cox in an issue devoted entirely to the circus. It was, appropriately, the lead article in a collection of pieces by authors from around the world, and there was some speculation this would be the last writing we would ever see by him. But no, for the past few years he had been at work on a book on the Bertram Mills Circus, which he finished and whose manuscript is presently with his publisher. Britain's most distinguished writer on the circus has prepared for us a posthumous treat, and a treat it will be, coming from the graceful pen of Antony Hippisley Cox. —A. H. Saxon

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Arthur Grotefent

WALLENDAS' 60th ANNIVERSARY IN NORTH AMERICA

By Debbie Wallenda

An integral part of the Wallenda tradition is the Grotefent high wire troupe. Arthur Grotefent was Karl Wallenda's half brother, and his troupe learned the delicate techniques of highwire from Karl.

For years the Grotefents and Wallendas worked side by side, trick for trick on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. It was in 1947 that the Grotefents joined forces with the Wallendas to create the seven person pyramid and the Wallenda Circus.

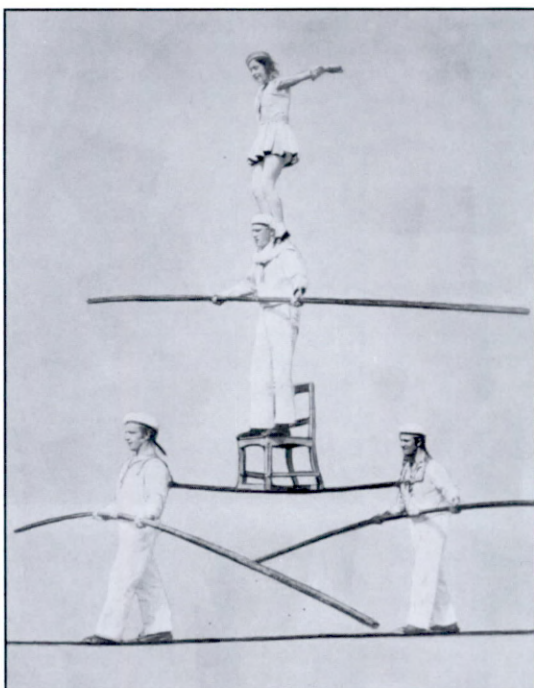
Arthur, 73, is the only surviving member of the Grotefent troupe. He recalls learning highwire from his elder brothers, Karl and Herman.

At nine years of age Arthur was given a pole and taught how to balance with it. He, like the rest of his family, was born into the business. By the time he began learning highwire he had already been an aerialist on the trapeze and rings, an acrobat and a hand balancer. "In other words we had to do the whole dog gone show," he said. It was when Karl wanted to open his own show, Arena Wallenda, in Germany that Arthur added highwire to his arsenal of talents.

"I was on a low wire for three or four days until; he [Karl] saw I had the balance. At that time we were working about forty to forty-five feet on big pine trees we had gotten ourselves out of the woods and trimmed them, cleaned them up, and then we worked with a net. Karl said, 'Come on up.'" Arthur remembered. "At that time we had no rope ladders, we had pegs on the trees. So then I climbed on top and Karl said, 'Okay, grab the pole and go.' So I grabbed the pole, but I didn't go. 'Come on I'll hold you.' Karl beckoned. He held me on the back and the side. I went out about two or three steps and Karl pulled away. Then I stood there, I didn't want to go back or forward. So he had a needle and he jammed that needle in my posterior and I jumped, I didn't run, I jumped! From then on I figured I was still there so I went across. Karl told me to turn around and come back, so I did."

After two weeks Arthur was already performing dangerous feats on the highwire. While the Wallenda act awaited the arrival of Helen Kreis in 1927, it was Arthur who had to assume the top mounting responsibilities.

"I was small enough and light enough to be a top mounter. I had to work as a girl. Karl had an engagement with Circus Gleich . . . and he needed four people. Joe [Geiger], Herman [Wallenda], Karl and myself. But I had to be top mounter and I had to be a girl. So they put girl's clothes on me and they made me up as a girl. I had to wear a wig with a rubber band so the wig would stay on. Karl said to me, 'Now you go out there and you do the roll over.' So, I said okay, that was something big for



The Grotefents shortly after they arrived in the United States in 1930. Philip Kreis and Willie Wallenda are on the wire with Lulu Wallenda and Arthur Grotefent on the chair. Wallenda Family collection.

me, a girl doing a roll over," Arthur said. "I went out and did the roll over and as I came back, the wig fell off and flew into the audience."

Upon Helen's arrival, she, Karl, Herman and Joe went to Havana, Cuba where they were contracted by John Ringling to go to America and the Ringling-Barnum show in 1928.

"When they left, we didn't even attempt to have a highwire act or anything with our show that we had. There wasn't anybody there. My dad didn't walk it, my cousins didn't walk it. I was the only highwire walker. So we gave it up until 1930. I didn't walk a wire for those two years," Arthur said.

Those years were spent teaching the rest of the family highwire because in 1930 Arthur, his brother Willie Wallenda, and father George and Herman's wife Lutzky went to America and worked under the Grotefent name in a two ring display with the Wallendas on Ringling-Barnum.

Arthur, and his troupe, remained in this country with Ringling-Barnum throughout 1931. In 1932, 1933 and 1934 he, Willie, Lutzky and Helen's brother Philip Kreis took the Grotefent troupe back to Europe.

Another Grotefent troupe, under the direction of Arthur's father remained in the states and worked in Atlantic City in 1933. This made three Wallenda acts working at the same time.

Arthur said nothing about working the highwire bothered him until he was twenty-one years old and fell. The troupe, under the direction of Willie, was performing at the Tivoli Theater in Hanover, Germany in 1934 when they came tumbling to the ground breaking both of his hips.

"It wasn't alone the height that bothered me, it was the uncertainty of the rigging. It was a fault of the rigging that brought us down," Arthur said.

In 1935 the Grotefents, made up of Arthur, George, Eugene Fleck, Rudy Meder and Helen's sister Yetty Kreis, returned to the Ringling show and worked with the Wallendas until 1938 when the strike arose. Karl took his troupe to Europe and Arthur took his troupe to the Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto presenting Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey features.

"I don't know whether we used the Grotefent name or jumped back into the Wallendas," he said. [The troupe was listed as the Grotefents in the revised Barnes program.] "We were all the same



The larger Grotefent troupe in the early 1930s. Left to right Rudy Meder, Eugene Black, Henritta Kreis, George Grotefent and Arthur Grotefent. Wallenda Family collection.

as far as the family was concerned. The only thing we were concerned about was the names. We didn't want Wallenda and Wallenda, so we used Wallenda and Grotefent. The new generation doesn't know the Grotefents. But, people my age, all know the Grotefents."

In Houston, Texas Arthur married Yetty Kreis. When the Grotefents no longer worked on the Ringling show Arthur said they worked fairs and parks and other shows until the end of 1946.

In the winter of 1946-1947, the two troupes combined talents to create Karl's dream, the seven person pyramid, Yetty being the first woman to top the towering pyramid in practice and in public. Arthur said the family also practiced an eight person pyramid. Instead of a woman balancing a chair on the top, Karl and Helen did a two-person-high. But, Arthur explained, the girl on the top chair was better aesthetically so they opted for that. Arthur said no one in either act ever doubted Karl's ideas for new tricks. "We knew if he could do it, we could do it," he said. "He may have had an awkward way, but by the time we got it all ironed out, it was feasible."

"Karl had a way that not everybody has. He was stern but he was kind. He was a comedian. Whatever he said you couldn't take cross. In other words if he wanted to see something done we said let's go ahead and do it and make him happy. That's the attitude we had to him. He could be mean. He could be loud and noisy and stern, but we never

paid much attention to it. First, his English was so bad we all laughed about it, his vocabulary stunk. He was funny, that guy. But he got what he wanted, we couldn't get around him."

When first attempting a new trick Arthur said, "We weren't too nervous, we knew each other and we knew that we could do it. . . . Nothing changed too much. We had two wire acts already, eight people. Just the equipment changed, the people were doing the same thing all the time."

At the same time as she began mounting the seven, Yetty also learned sway pole. "When Karl took his show out, I was supposed to do the sway pole," Arthur said. "But I didn't like it. First of all it was too dog gone high for me, 120 feet is too high for anyone. It was not my cup of tea. So Karl worked it. Then one time in Georgia I was laying underneath a truck fixing it and I heard someone calling me. I knew it was Yetty, so I rolled out from under the truck, looked around, and saw nothing. Then I heard it again and I looked up at the pole and there she was. I got so mad for the simple reason it wasn't even guyed out. The pole wasn't even guyed out and there she was sitting on top swinging back and forth. Not much, just a little bit back and forth. From then on she was dedicated to the pole. She did the pole and highwire."

"When there were too many shows . . . they would alternate, Karl one show and Yetty one show. . . . We did five acts in the show, five times a day and we got \$5.00 for the whole day," Arthur laughed.

For another ten years Arthur and Yetty remained with the Wallendas and the seven person pyramid. In 1957 both of them retired from the highwire and toured with just Yetty's sway pole.

"We left because we could never get enough money," Arthur said. "Our first year out alone, we made enough money to buy a house and the things we wanted." Something, he said, they were unable to do in all the years working the seven and doing the pole.

By 1962 Arthur had retired from the road and had a job as a building manager in Indianapolis. Yetty was still doing her sway pole and Arthur would drive on weekends to where ever she was working and help her set up. In January of that year Yetty had booked her pole in the Shrine Circus in Detroit, the same date Karl had booked the highwire troupe with the seven person pyramid. Ar-

thur had driven to Detroit, set up the pole and returned to Indianapolis.

"When the seven fell I just couldn't think. I just couldn't believe it," he said. "Yetty called me at midnight and I drove up the next morning."

Arthur said he remained in Indianapolis only a short time after the accident before he returned to the road with Yetty. He said they only did a few more dates at the end of that year before returning to Sarasota. The 1963 season opened in Florida and then it was up to Omaha, Nebraska. There she worked her sway pole. Arthur said, "She was in the head stand, she came out of it and never took a bow, she just sat down and fell over backwards. On her way down she hit a guy line and probably broke her back."

"I didn't see it," he said remembering it as if it just happened yesterday. "I was pushing out a cage. When I came out everything was quiet. I looked over to the stage . . . and then I looked up to the pole and there was no one there . . . and then it hit me."

The last time Arthur saw Karl before his fatal accident in 1978 was in Chicago where Karl did a skywalk. Arthur said he and Karl separated and it was a few weeks later that Karl fell to his death. Arthur said he refused to read any papers or watch any television reports on the accident. When he finished his date, he returned once again to Sarasota to bury his brother.

In all the accidents Arthur said he felt angry, but, he said, "In our business we are born in it . . . it's fate."

Looking back the sixty years in North America Arthur said, "We did pretty good. Our family stayed close together for years and years. That's because of Karl, he was the driving wedge."

The second Grotefent troupe that appeared in Atlantic City, New Jersey in 1933. George Grotefent is second from left. Wallenda Family collection.



ONLY BIG SHOW COMING

Season of 1882

By Orin C. King

CHAPTER 3 PART THREE

Old John Robinson came to Kansas in 1882 with a splendid show moving, so he claimed, on "FIFTY MAGNIFICENT PALACE CARS." "10 EXHIBITIONS COMBINED! 10. In one vast village of Colossal Tents, representing an outlay of TWO MILLION DOLLARS!" Robinson had an excellent menagerie and boasted of 50 dens containing "Every animal, beast and reptile named by Noah."

Robinson advertised some animals without explaining what they might be. What Kansas boy ever heard of a tamandua, a tamarau, or a tamarin? A search revealed that a tamandua is an arboreal anteater of Central and South America; a tamarau is a small dark sturdily built buffalo native to the Philippine island of Mindoro; and a tamarin is a South American marmoset with silky fur and a long tail.

In his newspaper advertisements Old John revealed the "cost" of some of his rare animals.

The show had:

"\$5,000 drove of real, live Giraffes

"\$30,000 drove of white and African Ostriches

"\$20,000 invested in a school of Sea Lions

"\$10,000 drove of Australian Kangaroos

"\$40,000 Two-Horned Rhinoceros, 7 feet high; weighs 9,000 pounds

"\$10,000 pair of Taminours

"\$5,000 flock of African blood-sucking Vampires

"\$5,000 Man-eating Equestrian Gorilla

"\$10,000 White Nile Hippopotamus

"\$3,000 African Hartebeest"

The Topeka State Journal, June 7, ran a story on the cost of menagerie animals without revealing the source of the information. Even so, the list in the Journal makes an interesting comparison with the brags of Old John Robinson which should not be taken at face value, for the essence of circus advertising is gross exaggeration.

Old John does not reveal how many animals are in a "drove," a "flock," or a "school."

The Journal reported a giraffe of 18 feet cost \$25,000. Robinson's "drove" at \$45,000 is not out of line.

Robinson's "drove" of ostriches at \$30,000 does not properly compare to the Journal's reported cost of from \$2,000 to \$2,500.

Robinson claimed a "school" of sea lions costing \$20,000, whereas the Journal reported a price of \$100 to \$200 each. It is highly unlikely that Old John had 100 sea lions.

The Journal reported kangaroos from \$500 to \$1,000, but Robinson had a \$10,000 "drove."

The Journal reported a rhinoceros at \$6,000 to \$10,000 and a hippopotamus

um, Museum, Egyptian Caravan, and Strictly Moral Circus had an impressive roster of performers. The show had a top-flight group of equestrians, including Robert Stickney, Emma Lake, Minnie Marks, Christine Stickney, George Holland and John Harry. Others on the bill were Edward Holland, "A Marvelous Performer;" Zela, female cannon ball; George Rodgers, "The Anatomical Wonder with a guttapercha Stomach, who swallows Bayonets, Swords and Muskets; Miss Lawlaw, "The Woman of the Iron Jaw;" James Shultz, strongman, "pulling against Elephant;" Basso Dubuque troupe aerial gymnasts; George Scott and Family, "Gymnasts Extraordinary;" Eleine, "High, Long and Lightening Leaper;" Prof. Samuels "School of Comic Monkeys, Dogs, Goats and Ponies."

The Alfredo Family worked a high wire act which involved riding a bicycle across the arena. It should be remembered that the bicycle was a high-wheeler and not a safety bike.

Clowning featured John Lowlow and William Ash.

At the top of the bill was America's foremost clown "MR. DAN RICE" who was engaged "at a princely salary"

to appear at every performance as Master of Ceremonies.

Robinson played Clay Center, May 2, and Russell, May 8. Neither date was reviewed by the local press.

The Russell Kansas Record, May 6, carried an interview with Geo. W. Aiken, General Advertising Agent.

"There are 37 men ahead of this show and 12 in this car, which does most of the posting of bills; they use 320 lbs of flour per day, and from 2,200 to 3,700 sheets of paper, which cost on an average of 25 cents per sheet. They have six kinds of programmes and send men 60 miles in every direction from the town they show in. They frequently put up 700 feet of billboard, twenty feet high, but this country was too windy for board stands.

"They frequently go 300 miles per day, at every station throw off hundreds



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF JOHN ROBINSON'S GREAT SHOW. THE BIGGEST AND THE BEST IN THE WORLD.

Old John Robinson looks down on a bird's eye view of his circus and parade in this illustration from a Robinson advertising piece used around 1882. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise noted.

from \$3,000 to \$5,000, but Robinson's rhinoceros, he claimed, cost \$40,000.

Other animals priced in the Journal but not on Robinson's roster were:

Bengal tiger, \$2,500; Polar bear, \$1,000; Black bear, \$100; Camel, \$300 to \$400; Yak, \$1,000 to \$1,500; Birds from \$5 to \$1,000; Monkeys, \$50 to \$200; Stripped hyena, \$500; Spotted hyena, \$200; Tapir, \$600 to \$800; Zebra, \$700 to \$800; Llama, \$500; Big snakes, \$200 to \$500.

Old John Robinson's Overtowering, Gigantic Union of Shows, Great World's Exposition, Menagerie, Aquari-

of bills advertising the show for the next stand.

"There is not a man ahead of the show who uses intoxicating liquors, and everyone knows his business and Mr. Aiken sees that they attend to it. He keeps his office in perfect condition and has a case of tickets fixed up that would do credit to any mercantile house. His car has air-brakes, Miller platform and is run on passenger trains."

Robinson did not exhibit in Topeka in 1882, but the *Capital* reported on the show frequently.

April 24, "John Robinson's advertising car passed east over the Union Pacific yesterday."

May 1, "A train of twenty-seven cars, having on board John Robinson's 'World Exposition' passed west over the U. P. road yesterday morning at 9:45. They show at Manhattan today. Dan Rice, the great reformer, was on board."

May 8, "John Robinson's big show exhibits at Leavenworth on the 13th."

May 14, "There were 8,000 people attended Dan Rice's 'Robinson Circus' at Ellsworth last Friday."

May 29, "On the day of Robinson's show the attendance of the Marysville school dropped off 276."

"The handsome advertising car of the Sells Bros.' Circus and Railroad shows, the most elaborate and perfectly equipped coach of the kind in the country, will be at the Santa Fe depot all day, and," in the opinion of the Topeka *Daily Capital*, April 18, 1882, "it will pay going down to look at it." George I. Guilford, advance agent, was a guest at Allen Sells' hotel, the Windsor.

The Sells brothers, Ephraim, Allen, Lewis and Peter were well known in Topeka. Sells shows had spent three winters on the fair grounds in Topeka, and the brothers had made real estate loans to Topeka business men. Allen, Lewis and Peter had bought business properties in the city and at the end of the season, Allen sold out to his brothers for \$40,000 and made Topeka his home.

The town was thoroughly papered for the exhibitions of Tuesday, May 9.

The first newspaper ad appeared in the *Weekly Commonwealth* on April 27, featuring likenesses of the four proprietors. Topeka's four dailies carried ads beginning April 30. All of the ads described the show train as being "Specially Constructed Palace, Stock and Platform Cars, and Longest Railway Trains Ever Used for the Transportation of Amusement Organizations." According to the show's *Route Book* for 1882, the circus moved on 16 flats

SELLS BROTHERS
1882
RAILROAD SHOWS
6 ENORMOUS
NOW UNITED
SIX BIG MENAGERIES
SIX BIG CIRCUSES
SIX BIG MUSEUMS
AND SIX BIG AQUARIUMS
UNDER SIX BIG TENTS



AN INCOMPARABLE EXHIBITION

GIRAFFES BROKEN TO HARNESS	AMPHIBIAN LIONS
EDUCATED STALLIONS	AFRICAN ELAND
PERFORMING CATTLE	AMAZONIAN TAPIR
BABIROUSSA	WHITE RHINOCEROS
TARTARIAN YAK	AFRICAN CHACMA
HERD OF MAMMOTH ELEPHANTS	SUN BEAR
HUGE HORNED OAFIR HORSE	
WHITE ZEBRA FROM ZULULAND	
A PAIR OF ARABIAN CRESTED CAMELS	
A SNOW-WHITE DAKOTA BUFFALO, RECENTLY CAPTURED	
A MONSTER BRACE OF SIBERIAN ALBINO BEARS!	

WITNESS OUR PYRAMID OF LIVING MARVELS



THE NE PLUS ULTRA OF EQUESTRIENNE STARS

CHARLES FISH.	ADELAIDE CORDONA.
DON JERONIMO BELL.	CARON AND WASHINGTON.
FRENCH FAMILY DAVENE.	CHARLES SEELY.
LOTTIE AYMAR.	ED. NEARY.
VAN AUKEN AND PAINE.	MUSICAL MOMUES.
DELHAUR.	E. HOWARD. MONS. BARETTO.
W. B. AYMAR.	TOM WARD. WM. REARICK.

This 1882 Sells Bros. Circus herald is typical of those used by circuses during that period. It was printed by the Courier Co. of Buffalo, New York.

(platform cars), 8 stock, 2 elephant, 1 baggage and 3 coaches. Allen Sells was "Master of Transportation."

Headliners in the "Six Great Menageries" of the newspaper ads were "A Pair of Full-Grown Hippopotamuses, a monster White Rhinoceros, A Brace of Siberian Albino Bears, a Malacca Babiroussa,* A Herd of Mammoth Elephants."

Charles Fish, "The Phenomenal Four-

Horse Rider," received top billing. Other featured performers were the Spanish equestrienne, Signorita Adelaide Cordona; the Davene Family, aerialists; Caron and Washington, acrobatic musical clowns; Rice Brothers, gymnasts; and Charles Seely "ably assisted by his Aid-de-Camp in Motely, Mr. E. Neary."

In 1882 Adam Forepaugh was still promoting Louise Montague, "the handsomest woman in America," as Lalla Rookh. The Sells brothers went even further and featured in their parade "Columbia and her court of beauty, in which, appropriately grouped, will appear THE FOUR HANDSOMEST WOMEN IN AMERICA."

The show arrived from Kansas City at a proper hour and erected its tents on alot on east Ninth street.

"Never did Kansas Avenue, Topeka's spacious thoroughfare," commented the *Commonwealth*, "look fairer than it did under the May sunshine yesterday morning. Lined as it was upon either sidewalk by thousands of spectators; with the pomp and splendor of the pageant of the Sells Brothers' great show, filing along its length, the grand old avenue presented an animated spectacle worthy of the brush of an artist, a bright and varied panorama to be remembered by all beholders."

The performances were well attended, the *Capital* reported, "The attendance at the afternoon and evening exhibition, yesterday, of the great show of Sells Bros., was so great as to deserve special mention. The large amphitheater capable of seating six thousand persons was crowded to its utmost capacity and on each occasion the vacant space in front of the chairs was occupied by persons unable to find seats."

"The circus, in two large rings, was first-class and consisted of the usual fine horsemanship, jumping, etc. Mr. Willie Sells, one of the proprietors, is a very remarkable young rider and performed numerous thrilling feats with ease. At the conclusion of his last act, when he had successfully managed and ridden four spirited horses, a beautiful bouquet was handed him, sent by young ladies of Topeka. The young rider bowed his acknowledgements."

The *Capital* was in error when it called Willie "one of the proprietors," but the 17 year old "Apollo" would be the last person to admit it.

Between the matinee and the evening performance, the band, according to the *Journal*, "played several fine pieces in front of the Windsor about 8 o'clock

**AT COLUMBUS,
TUESDAY, JUNE 6!**

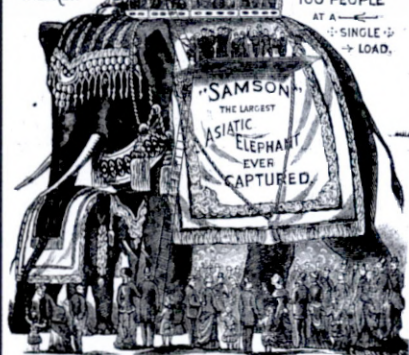
A GRAND TOUR OF OHIO AND INDIANA.

THE LARGEST ASIATIC ELEPHANT
Ever captured or known to exist, and now with THE BIGGEST OF ALL THE BIG SHOWS, a 50 composition for 5,000 Amazing Performers, is shown in

W. W. COLE'S

NEW NINE SHOWS CONSOLIDATED.
Circus, Menagerie, Theatre, Gallery of Wax Statuary, Bicycle College, Russian Roller Skaters, Museum Encyclopedia and Races.

A GREAT
TREAT
FOR THE
CHILDREN



SAMSON
THE LARGEST ELEPHANT LIVING.
THE PET OF ALL THE CHILDREN.
THE WORLD-FAMOUS MONARCH.
THE MIGHTIEST OF BEASTS.
THE STRONGEST ELEPHANT ON EARTH.
THE BIGGEST ELEPHANT EVER CAPTURED.
THE GIANT OF HIS RACE.

SAMSON
THE GREAT AND ONLY
THE TALL AND STATURE
THE RUDE AND POWERFUL
THE ALL-POWERFUL
THE ALL-POWERFUL
THE POPULAR AND PLAYFUL
THE GREAT BIG-HEARTED
THE SWIFT, LUNCHING
bought after by all the Zoological Gardens, but are by no means and superlatively held at a
delicious price, but finally secured for this THE LEADING SHOW OF THE WORLD,
where actually contains every feature advertised, and presents absolute complete, sensational, first-
and best, and full particulars in future announcements. THE DATE IS FIXED, THE
DAY IS CERTAIN. Excursions. There will be run on all Railroads. Prices will be reduced
and vast savings covered with our many tents and mammoth shows.

Note our Coming. Prepare for a Great Event.

Administrator's Sale. NOTICE.

The 1882 W. W. Cole newspaper ads told of Sampson the large elephant.

last evening. The music was unusually good, and was enjoyed by a large crowd of hotel guests and spectators."

There was unscheduled excitement at the evening exhibition, as reported by the *Commonwealth*.

"A Row at the Circus. Two men who work on farms southwest of the city attended the circus last night, after taking aboard a considerable quantity of bad whiskey. In the tent they became boisterous and blackguarded people so much that Marshal Cochran ordered them to be quiet. A short time afterward they again indulged in bad language and when again cautioned, refused to be still. Marshal Cochran undertook to arrest them. Officers Lamon, King and Taylor were on hand and after a short scuffle, in which one of the men was hit over the head with a billy, they were both arrested and locked up. Mr. Byrth, who tried to assist Cochran, was hit from behind in the neck, but not seriously hurt. Officer Lamon, in trying to hit one of the men, hit Cochran on the knuckles, making a painful wound."

Justice was quick and sure in 1882, and the two men came to trial the following morning. The *Journal* reported the action.

"Police Court. The two men who created the disturbance at the circus last night were each fined \$5 for being drunk and disorderly. The men were tried under the assumed name of Larges, not wishing to have their right names on a police record. Their employer a well known farmer near the city was at court and plead their cases. This secured their release with a light penalty. The fines were paid and the men went on their way rejoicing. Charles Finn was fined \$5 for drunkenness and went to the stone pile." The "stone pile" was, literally, a stone pile where smaller stones were made from larger ones.

As for Marshal Cochran, the *Journal* stated, "The Marshal's hand was badly bruised and one finger broken. When the names of the rowdies were asked, they said they were of the James gang."

The *Capital* found 6,000 people at each performance, but the *Commonwealth* found only 3,500 to 4,000 at the matinee and "fully 5,000" at the 2 1/2 hour evening performance.

From Topeka the show moved to Atchison and then on to St. Joseph, Missouri. The show returned to Kansas in July for further exhibitions, including these towns: July 12, Leavenworth; July 13, Lawrence; July 15, Emporia; July 26, Oswego. Everything went smoothly at Leavenworth, Lawrence and Oswego, but Emporia was different. The *Emporia News* reported that the show train consisted of "thirty-two fifty feet cars."

"The threatening weather Saturday," the *News* reported, "delayed the street parade of Sells Bros.' circus for some hours, but the procession made a tour of the principal thoroughfares shortly after noon, and the imposing pageant was witnessed by crowds of people who lined the streets. The parade was an exceedingly creditable one, and was the best, we believe, we have ever seen in Emporia. Among the leading objects of interest were five baby elephants which excited wonder and admiration along the entire line of march; a cage in which four immense lions and their keeper were exposed to full view; the wagon containing the giraffe, whose graceful head was visible from all points; the glittering band wagons and the steam calliope."

The *News* carried the major parade story on another page under the heading "An Elephant At Large." A young elephant broke ranks during

the procession and fled at top speed, which amazed the onlookers.

"He entered the premises of Hon. T. N. Sedgwick, county attorney, on the corner of Fifth and Market, by a rear opening to the lot, when he evidently felt measurably secure, and proceeded at leisure to walk around the house in order to present himself at the front door."

County Commissioner Jones was sitting on the front porch of the Sedgwick house when the elephant approached. Jones "at about two jumps landed in the street, thus putting the fence between himself and the elephant." At this point the handlers took control and peaceably led the rebellious young "bull" back to the parade. In conclusion the *News* commented, "Commissioner Jones, it is evident, has no confidence in elephants."

According to the *Emporia Daily Republican*, "an immense crowd attended the afternoon exhibition. The menagerie contained a giraffe, a rhinoceros, two hippopotami of good size, and was in other respects quite up to the standard. The woolly elephants, however, did not put in an appearance. The circus performance in two rings, was good as the best, though the supplementary concert business was overcrowded upon the attention of the audience. Mr. W. W. Freeman, the gentlemanly press agent attached to the six consolidated shows, needs to provide different doorkeepers at the reserved seat entrance if he desires the press to make his invitations to accept of the usual courtesies for first-class shows, available. The evening performance, though a very heavy rain fell, was fairly attended, and Sells Brothers did a profitable business here on a very rainy day." Despite the

Sells Bros. newspaper ad used in advance of the Fort Scott, Kansas date of July 25, 1882.

THE BIGGEST OF ALL SHOWS!
—And the Only Big Show Coming This Year!—

As Superior to Any Show that has ever Visited Here as an Electric Light is in a Yellow Candle!
Augmented and Enlarged to Six Times Its Former Size!
Presented by Price and Public to be the Finest Tent Exhibition on the Face of the Globe!

SELLS BROTHERS'
6 SIX 6

Enormous Railroad Shows Now United!



WILL DEBUT AT
FORT SCOTT, TUESDAY, JULY 23.

awkwardness of the language, the reporter's displeasure with Mr. Freeman registers clearly.

W. W. Cole's New Nine United Gigantic Shows which came to Topeka, Monday, July 24, was a first-class company. Many of the features of 1881 were retained, including the Maori warriors, the Bedouins, the stallion, and Blondin, the Australian Rope Walker. Added were the Russian roller skaters, Captain Bogardus, "shoo-tist," and his seven-year old son and Samson, "the largest elephant ever captured." In the museum one could see the president and noted men in wax.

Circus day began June 23 when R. C. Campbell came to town and made the initial arrangements for the exhibition of July 24. An advertising car with a crew of nine under the direction of H. G. Berger arrived July 6 and the town was thoroughly posted. The crew checked into the Fifth Avenue hotel. On the 17th another crew arrived and hung new posters on the billboards, replacing those washed off by the rains.

The show arrived on the Union Pacific about 3 a.m. on Sunday morning, unloaded in North Topeka and moved immediately to the lot between Ninth and Tenth streets on the east side of town south of the river. W. W. Cole, his mother, and forty employees were guests of the Fifth Avenue hotel.

The *Capital* reported a Sunday night visit from H. F. Richards, press agent. Richards had been with Cole for the last ten years, but had once been a resident of Blue Rapids, Kansas.

The *Commonwealth* on the 25th reported that, "The rain which fell yesterday morning prevented a good many people from the country adjacent to Topeka from coming to town to see the circus, but Kansas avenue was well filled long before the hour for the procession. By eleven o'clock the heavy, threatening weather and light rain was over and the sun came out hot.

"The attendance in the afternoon was great enough to comfortably fill the tent, but the tent was small. There were more people out in the evening.

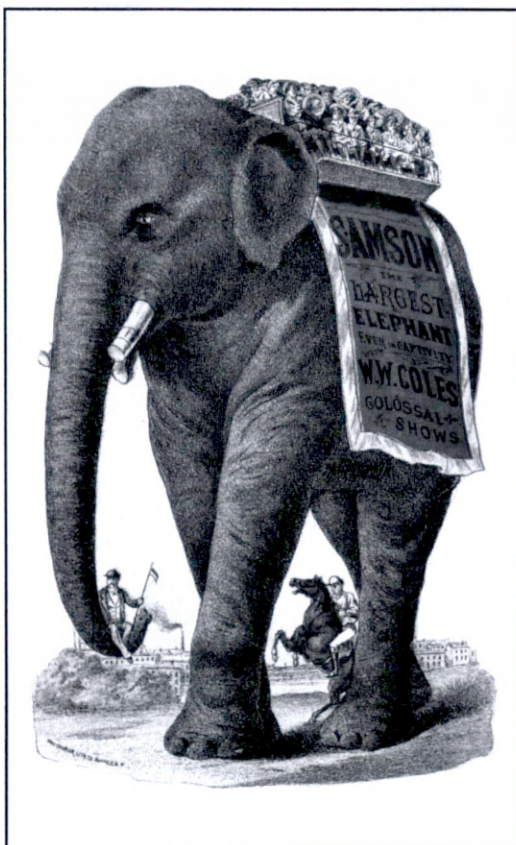
"The circus lasted only about an hour and a half, and as the weather was intensely warm the people were glad to get out of the tent."

The *Commonwealth*, the *Capital* and the *Journal* all thought the show excellent.

The *Capital* considered the most laughable feature of the show to be "the

roller skating by the three English performers, a young lady and two gentlemen. Their feats with the rollers were truly wonderful, and when two of them appeared on the platform as novices the large tent full of people resounded with roars of laughter."

The *Capital* also reported that, "At



Sampson, "the largest elephant ever in captivity" was illustrated on this full color cut-out card issued by W. W. Cole in 1882.

both afternoon and evening performances there was not a vacant seat inside the immense pavilion."

The *Journal* claimed, "There was an immense crowd at the tents in the afternoon, followed by another in the evening."

The review of the *Journal* paid scant attention to Cole's show, but devoted most of the space to a phenomenon frequently commented upon in the Kansas press which reflects much truth and gives an interesting insight to the importance of the circus in the hard lives of the abundant poor.

"Many persons used the very last cent they possessed on earth, in fact, until they could not ride home in the street car at five cents. Some people are always 'nearly crazy' to go to a circus and menagerie, and will endure and suffer almost any hardship for the few

hours of pleasure it affords. For such there is no one who really objects to their attending, unless they embarrass themselves in so doing. But many do this, and they place themselves in very uncomfortable positions for a long time to come by their extravagance in going. In hard times, and when many are very poor in worldly goods, why do they rake and scrape, and borrow, and place themselves under so many future obligations to go to a show that most of the wealthy classes cannot and will not give the time and money to attend?"

Kansas farmers were not the only victims of circus swindlers. The *Journal*, August 4, 1882, ran a story from Warsaw, New York, concerning grift on the Maybury, Pullman and Hamilton Circus.

"The reserved seat agent said: 'The price is ten cents, but if you have a ten or twenty dollar bill and will exchange it for small bills I will pass you free.' The bill was produced, the agent ran nimbly off what purported to be the required amount in small bills and passed it over, at the same time pushing the farmer along with the crowd. On counting his money only half the amount was found.

"Country folks should watch the reserved seat man with his new method of arithmetic."

The *Commonwealth*, September 6, reported that at Louisville, "The menagerie of the late United States show was sold at auction today (Sept. 5), and all except a llama and two lion whelps were bought by Burr Robbins. The sale aggregated \$25,000."

It was a rare day when a Pygopus** came to town, but two Kansas towns for certain had the opportunity to see a real live Pygopus in the summer of 1870. At McDonald's Hall in Ft. Scott, Wednesday and Thursday, July 13 and 14, the Pygopus could be seen from 2 to 4 and 7:30 to 9. Adults 50 cents, children twenty-five. In Lawrence, exhibitions were given Wednesday and Thursday, July 27 and 28, at Frazer's Hall.

The Ft. Scott *Monitor*, July 13, 1870, ran the following handout:

"The formation is that of two negroes, united from the lumber vertebrae down to the end of the sacrum. There are two heads, two bodies, four arms and four legs; two hearts, one on the left side of the one, and one on the right side of the other. Their names are Millie and Christina, and they were born of slave parents in 1852, in Co-

"They have firmly established themselves as conscientious show men, and carry their advertisements out to the letter."—*Hartford (Ct.) Courant*.

THE CROWNING SENSATION!

BATCHELLER & DORIS'

**GREAT INTER-OCEAN
LARGEST SHOW ON EARTH.**

A Grand Consolidation of Twelve First-Class Shows in One,

Composed of a Gigantic

Museum, Menagerie & Circus,

Which for vastness, attractiveness and originality has never been equalled.



THE WHOLE WORLD IN TRIBUTE:

Transported exclusively on its

3 Monster Palace Railway Trains 3

FOR THE SEASON OF 1882, AT THE ENORMOUS SALARY OF
\$25,000, WITH

MILLIE CHRISTINE

THE RENOWNED

TWO-HEADED LADY.

A Human Miracle, who has astonished and interested the lights of science, men of Eminence and the Medical Faculty of this and the Old World. She is the most

Miraculous Human Being since the Creation, having Two Perfect Heads and Shoulders, Four Hands and Arms, but one Body, and Four Lower Limbs and Feet.

She has full control of all her faculties, both mental and physical. Feels no pain whatever. Is a splendid vocalist—can sing a contralto, and also sing a soprano. She sings (sings and ballads) can walk on two or four of her lower limbs at will with ease. Her entertainments are attended by the best people, without regard to sect or society.

MAGNIFICENT FREE STREET PARADE

Daily at 10 a. m. Unparalleled in elegance and grandeur. The finest Highway Holiday

THE \$10,000 BEAUTY

In the role of "SEMIRAMIS" Queen of Assyria and founder of Babylon, clothed in Royal Eastern Purple, and gliding with costly gems, will appear in the procession daily with her Royal Train, personating Assyria's Queen, on her triumphal entry into Babylon from successful conquest.

You will positively see everything advertised and ten times more.

Remember this will be the only big show of the season.

Usual rates of admission. Doors open at 1 and 7. Performances at 2 and 6.

For Extension Trains on all Railroad and Steamboat lines, on the day of exhibition, at greatly reduced rates of fare.

George Batcheller and John B. Doris brought their Great Inter-Ocean show to Kansas in 1882.

lumbia county, North Carolina. Their weight at birth was seventeen pounds, and their present weight is about one hundred and thirty-nine pounds. They are well formed, and in excellent health, having rather pleasing features, and resembling each other very much, and having the complexion of a fair mulatto. They are cheerful and intelligent, fond of reading, sing sweetly, and converse modestly and fluently. Pain or sensation below the union is felt by both; one can locate its seat, the other cannot. They run and walk readily, and with celerity, and can dance a schottische gracefully. The inner limbs are a little shorter than the outer ones, and Christina, the left hand twin, is somewhat larger and stouter than Millie. The former lifts the latter and walks or runs with her with great ease, but Millie cannot perform the same feat with her sister. They appear contented and happy."

At the age of thirty, accompanied by their personal manager, Joseph Smith, The Pygopus, The Two-Headed Girl--Millie-Christine--returned to Kansas as the main attraction of Batcheller & Doris' Great Inter-Ocean Gigantic Museum, Menagerie and Circus, in the season of 1882.

Topeka was billed for Monday, September 4. The first announcement was made July 22 when Chas. A. Davis, Jos. Baker, Jos. Mahoney and Wm. West arrived to do the initial advertising.

The advertising car arrived early in the morning, August 21, and was side-tracked at the Union Pacific depot. Agent J. V. Streby (or Strebig) and 14 others checked in to the Fifth Avenue hotel. Streby placed ads in all the papers beginning August 26 in Topeka and a day earlier in the Silver Lake *News*. The Silver Lake advertisement appeared side-by-side on the same page with Forepaugh's advertisement for Topeka exhibitions on Thursday, September 4. Silver Lake is eleven miles west of Topeka.

Forepaugh's ads were in the Topeka papers a week ahead of Batcheller & Doris. The latter ran 16 ads in the Topeka papers for the date of September 4, but Forepaugh between August 19 and September 4, published 24 advertisements in Topeka and each one featured a different cut. After Batcheller & Doris had come and gone, Forepaugh used 11 more ads scattered among the three Topeka dailies.

The *Capital*, July 20, reported that, "Forepaugh's phiz smiles down on the passers from the billboards. His show is coming soon." According to the *Capital*, August 10, "A number of billboards were up yesterday for Forepaugh's show bills." On August 12, the *Capital* noted, "James A. Robinson, agent of the Great Forepaugh show, is a guest at the Fifth Avenue."

W. G. Crowley, representing Forepaugh, called on all of Topeka's papers August 15, and scheduled the publication of many handouts. Thirteen handouts appeared in the *Capital*; the *Journal* used 24; the *Commonwealth*, 21. Against the 54 handouts placed by the Forepaugh press department, Batcheller & Doris placed a total of 20 for all of Topeka's papers.

Charles A. Davis made a second visit to Topeka, August 29, on behalf of the Great Inter-Ocean. On show day, September 4, S. M. Charles called on the Topeka papers, paid the bills and extended the courtesy of the show to the newsmen.

Among the courtesies extended was an interview with Millie-Christine. In

every town local doctors were invited to examine Millie-Christine and the press was invited to report the findings. In Topeka, doctors Sheldon, Martin, Gibson, Mulvane, Roby and Righter called on the Two-Headed Woman in the parlors of the Fifth Avenue hotel. According to the *Commonwealth*, "The examination was perfectly satisfactory to all present, and proved that the managers of the show are advertising the genuine article."

Thirty-four members of the troupe registered at the Fifth Avenue hotel.

The *Capital* in reviewing the show stated that, "Johnny Patterson, the leading clown, possesses what is generally lacking--originality--and got off a couple of hits on our electric light that were duly appreciated. He is an Irish-



Millie and Christine, The Carolina Twins, born in 1851, were with the Batcheller and Doris show in 1882.

man and his brogue is irresistible. Mr. Showles, the daring bareback rider, is without an equal for one of his years, and Miss Etta Stokes, the lady equestrian, is one of the most daring and skillful performers seen in the arena. The ladder act by Frederick, Gloss and La Vavans was a superb display of strength." The show did "good business" in Topeka.

Commenting on the parade, the *Commonwealth* stated that, "As far as length is concerned it eclipsed the ordinary tent-and-lemonade visitor, and as to quality it was up to the average."

"The circus was well patronized both

afternoon and evening, and the entertainment afforded was in many respects excellent."

The *Journal* estimated the evening crowd between 4,500 and 5,000. "The display of animals was not large or rare, but rather below the average. The circus part was good. Showles, the bareback rider is the equal of Fish or Robinson, both of whom have made quite a sensation in the United States, in traveling with Barnum."

In conclusion the *Journal* touched on a nuisance suffered by generations of circus goers.

"Some fellow or fellows behind us having more money than brains wanted to purchase lemonade, candy and song-books whenever offered and caused us an infinite amount of annoyance."

The Great Inter-Ocean played Ft. Scott, September 7, thirteen days ahead of Forepaugh who billed the town for September 20. The *Evening Herald* on show day reported, "The circus this afternoon was heavily patronized and general satisfaction with the performance was expressed. The excellence of the whole performance was striking."

The rivalry between the shows continued in Parsons. Batcheller & Doris scheduled the town for September 8; Forepaugh, Tuesday, September 19.

Newspapers nearly always had warm regards for the press agent who called show day, paid the bill and gave out passes. The Parsons *Daily Sun* found George H. Hines, press and transportation agent for Batcheller & Doris to be "one of the most agreeable and clever gentlemen it has been our good fortune to meet for many-a-day."

The show drew fair-sized audiences. "The attendance, however," continued the *Sun*, "was not such as the show really merited. It is one of the best which has ever exhibited here and is well balanced in all its parts. The chief attractions of the circus are the ten-thousand-dollar beauty and the two-headed woman, the latter positively a marvelous human being. Besides these features there were numerous good acrobats and some excellent riding. The menagerie contained a fine collection of animals and birds. It was as decent and moral a show in every respect as we ever attended, and the managers and agents are all thorough gentlemen."

The appearance at Oswego, Saturday, September 9, was blessed by the absence of Forepaugh's harassment, but it was, indeed, a black day for the Great Inter-Ocean.

The Oswego *Independent*, September 15, reported, "One of the performers in Batcheller & Dorris (sic) show was killed here Saturday night. In turning a summersault from the shoulder of another showman he missed his footing and fell on his back. We are informed he died sometime that night." The man was never identified in the newspapers.



This Fielding band chariot appeared in the 1882 Batcheller and Doris parade. It had been purchased from John O'Brien in 1879. This photo of the wagon was taken on the Great Syndicate Show in 1894.

The editor of the *Independent* made a comment concerning shows that typified an attitude that was a long time dying in rural Kansas.

"If the shows could be purified so that chaste words and actions were only used in the ring, and danger to life and limb done away, then preachers and laymen can go to them as well as to a concert. The same remarks apply to fairs, when the gambler and jockey and office seeker are driven away from them, then we can go with our families and with our God."

The thousands of people who went to circuses in spite of editorial and pulpit condemnation from those who knew right from wrong, must have been greatly offensive to the righteous. The objectors were a small but stubborn and vocal minority. In many communities revival services were the only competition the circus had. Thousands went to the circus for a good time, and later to the revival tent to assuage their guilt for a day of pleasure. Kansas belonged in the Bible Belt.

Adam Forepaugh's press department in 1882 was among the best on the road, surpassed only by the prestige of the Barnum show, and that was hotly contested. Capable men like W. G. Crowley, aggressive and charming in an irresistible combination, called on editors all along the route. Crowley was

in Topeka, August 15, and captured the local press.

He placed substantial advertising in all Topeka papers and smothered the editors with a super-abundance of handouts. The prolific use of the canned stories may have been due to an infusion of money, but none of the stories used was presented as anything other than news of a coming event. In addition, countless one-and-two-liners appeared in the news columns.

"The wonderful baby elephant in the great Forepaugh show is allowed the freedom of the pavilions, and children are permitted to play with it."

"A gentleman recently took a contract to furnish Forepaugh, whose big show will be here Thursday, September 14, six center poles or masts for his mammoth circus tent, the largest ever made. They

were to be seventy feet long, eighteen inches at the base, and eight inches at the top."

"Wait for 4 Paw. He will be here September 14th."

"Don't Confound Forepaugh's Date With Any Other."

"Forepaugh, the great showman, has given \$50 to the soldiers' reunion."

"Only One Big Show Coming--4 Paws. September 14th Forepaugh comes with his 22 trained elephants. Wait for them. It will pay."

"One Body, Two Heads, Sept. 14th. Remember Forepaugh has the only two-headed white lady. His great show will be here September 14th."

The "two-headed white lady" is obviously an attempt to belittle black Millie-Christine of the Batcheller & Doris show, and was not mentioned again in any advertisement, handout or review.

Some of the long handouts are interesting reading. The *Commonwealth*, September 8, ran the following:

"The performance of Mons. Albion and his bicycle has been brought prominently before the public by its extraordinary character. The bicycle which he uses is eight feet in diameter, and weighs sixty-four pounds. It is said to be the largest one ever made. Albion was originally a clerk in a large iron dealing house in Paris. While there he learned to ride the instrument, and soon became a professional bicyclist. Grown tired of the ordinary size, he constructed one which has made him famous, and on which he has at times made long runs at a speed of one hundred miles an hour. On one occasion he made twenty-five miles in sixteen minutes, and at another time fifty-four miles in thirty-

five minutes. His best exploit, however, and the one which gained him the most renown, was the beating of an English locomotive in a thirty mile race."

The story continues, but all the important "facts" are described above.

Another handout described the act of Leonati, another cyclist. The act used a spiral apparatus "about ten feet wide at the base and terminating in a small oblong platform at the top about fifty feet from the ground. With a rush Leonati then appeared, and after speeding his bicycle rapidly about the ring several times sent it flying from base to top of the spiral. It was done so quickly and well that the astonished audience was held in silence for a moment, then came the applause, long and loud. When Leonati descended it was with lightening speed. It is a difficult and very dangerous task, inasmuch as the slightest mistake would fling him to the ground below, sure to meet accident and possibly death."

Other acts reported in handouts were the Silbons, aerial acrobats; Lizzie Deacon, equestrienne and friend of the queen of Austria; Harry and Eliza Alexander, giants from London, who "together were nearly nineteen feet long;" Zola, who walked the wire with her head in a sack and also crossed on a bicycle; and Louisa Renz, "the equestrienne queen of the Imperial Circus, Berlin."

It was either a brave or a fool-hardy press agent who wrote the following:

"Forepaugh has a Giantess with his great show, who is said to be the tallest lady on earth. With more than a giant's bulk, her occupations are eminently feminine. She sighs, being almost eight feet tall; she languishes, being three feet wide; she worketh slender sprigs upon the delicate muslin, her fingers being capable of molding a colossus; she sippeth her beer out of her glass daintily, her capacity being that of a keg; she goeth mincingly with those feet of hers, whose solidity need not fear the ox's pressure. Forepaugh comes September 14th."

An unusual parade feature was described in a handout in the *Commonwealth*, August 27.

"The Jubilees in the Sawdust Ring. Ever since the days of the original 'Jim Crow' (peace to his ashes) the 'cullied pussun' has occupied a prominent position in furnishing amusement to the play-going public, but it was not until after the war that the darky appeared in his most attractive live role--that of a

WAIT FOR THE LARGEST. WAIT FOR THE BEST. Coming September 20! MAKE NO MISTAKES. MARK WELL THE DATE.

22 ELEPHANTS FOREPAUGH SHOW

Fort Scott, Wednesday, September 20, 1882.

More Elephants than ever have been seen in the New World appear in the Great Forepaugh Show.

This huge Pyramid of Ponderous Elephants is formed precisely as here illustrated, by a part of the great herd of Mastodons, in Forepaugh's Colossal Sifting, Circus, and trained animal exhibition.



AMUSING AND ASTONISHING ACTS OF WONDERFULLY TRAINED ANIMALS TO BE SEEN ONLY IN



FOREPAUGH'S GREAT TWO RING CIRCUS. HANDSOMEST WOMEN IN AMERICA!

Presenting "Lulu Smith," and the Beauty of the Circus, the most magnificent animal exhibition ever seen in the West. A Source of Bright, Sumptuous Charities!

Admission: 50 Cents. Children under 1 Year, 25 Cents.

Wait Until September 20!

Adam Forepaugh advertised 22 trained elephants for the Fort Scott, Kansas September 20, 1882 date.

liberated slave singing his old religious plantation songs. The first circus man to appreciate the public interest in the slave bands was Adam Forepaugh and this year he has added a genuine host fresh from the southern plantations. Clad in their own grotesque garb, mounted on bales of cotton which are loaded on a plantation wagon drawn by plantation mules, each one as black as a crow, they form one of the most striking features of the street parade. No burnt cork here--nothing but pure moke. They will give with a gusto the melodies of slavery days as did the slaves of olden times.

"Ole Massa gib me a piece of meat

"An' Missus gib me bread

"But Sally gib me one sweet kiss,

"Which almos' lay me dead.

"Forepaugh's show will exhibit in Topeka, September 14th."

Only the *Commonwealth* published a review of show day: "The parade made by Forepaugh's circus yesterday was the finest that that has been seen on Topeka's streets in years, and it was witnessed by about twenty thousand persons. The show itself was attended by fully ten thousand people, the tent being packed seemingly as full as it could be. In the evening there was even a larger attendance, many hundreds being turned away. During the day exhibition several ladies fainted and children were almost suffocated."

Advertisements for the two-ring show claimed the tent could seat 20,000--some ads put the figure at 15,000--but the *Commonwealth* estimated crowded tent as holding 10,000. Even so, two crowds of at least 10,000 each was an amazing multitude for a city of 16,000 residents.

When the show pulled out of Topeka one of its laboring men, Thomas Gibson was "sleeping it off" in City park. Judge Thomas ordered his release from jail on condition that he rejoin the Forepaugh show, and Gibson left immediately.

In every town, a few days before the exhibition, Prof. Abt of the Forepaugh advance crew would give a magic lantern show using a canvas hung on the side of a downtown building. The projector used a powerful calcium light which threw an image 15 feet high on the screen. Over one hundred lantern slides comprised the visual entertainment and Prof. Abt's lecture provided the audio portion.

The *Emporia Daily Republican*, September 16, reported, "The magic lantern exhibition given last night on Sixth avenue by an advance guard of Forepaugh's show was one of the most novel and attractive advertising schemes ever invented. The pictures are true to life, and the comic ones especially, were so funny that the little boys could hardly keep their sides from splitting. If the great menagerie and circus itself is any better than its forerunner, and it no doubt is, there will be a tremendous crowd to see it."

The review of the exhibitions of Monday, September 18, published by the *Emporia News* the following day stated, "Shortly after 5 o'clock Monday afternoon angry looking clouds began to roll up from the southwest, and soon a gale, appropriately characteristic of Kansas, began to make itself felt, and especially did it assert its power in the vicinity of the show grounds. The main canvas of Forepaugh's show was badly 'shattered.' On the south side a hole was torn in the top large enough to throw a house through, and it appeared for a time as though the entire institution would be leveled with the ground. So fierce was the gale that the canvas of the side show was in danger of being swept away, and to be on the safe side, it was taken down and packed away together with the curiosities, monstrosities and the 'odities' characteristic of a circus side show.

"The weather throughout the balance of the evening was threatening, but

notwithstanding all nearly every seat in the great tent was occupied by the festive sight-seer. The performance embraced some excellent features, the tumbling and the trained elephants being especially worthy of mention, but by the time it was half over the elements began to grow more and more threatening, and the audience grew nervous, and when 'the last act' was performed the worst kind of a scattering flint-lock gun could have been discharged among those who remained without fear of hitting anyone."

The performances at Parson, September 19, were described in the *Parsons Daily Sun* on the 20th.

"The Circus.

"The great Forepaugh show has come and gone. The parade on the streets was the most imposing ever in the city, the procession being nearly a mile in length. The exhibitions under the canvas both afternoon and night, however, were anything but satisfactory to either the public or the owner of the great show. At Emporia the night previous the tent was badly wrecked by a heavy windstorm and our people were forced to witness the circus without any canvas overhead, and in the evening the rain deprived a great majority of those who had remained away in the afternoon with the expectation of going at night from witnessing the performance at all.

"At the afternoon performance the seats were all filled. At night, notwithstanding the rain, and no canvas overhead, there were not less than eight or nine hundred persons in attendance.

"The pleasures of the afternoon performance were also somewhat marred by a couple of accidents. The bicycle rider in doing his great spiral elevated roadway act, and as he was descending, fell from his bicycle and only saved himself from a perhaps fatal fall by catching and hanging onto the supports along the side of the spiral roadway. The other accident was a serious, though not fatal as many supposed who witnessed it, fall of a little boy during the trapeze act. The little fellow, Walter Silbon, aged 11 years, was thrown by his father a distance of sixty feet and struck the ground just beyond instead of dropping into a net as was the intention. At a late hour last night he was resting comfortably, no bones being broken, and will be able to be up and around again in a few days.

"It is but justice to say, notwithstanding the adverse circumstances under which Forepaugh exhibited here, enough was seen at both day and night

performances to prove that his show is not only a large but a good one."

September 20, the show played Ft. Scott. The editor of the *Evening Herald* was less than interested.

"The circus promised by flaming advertisements and a magnificent street parade, disappointed many yesterday. Whether owing to the absence of a tent cover, which a storm at Emporia destroyed, or to a lack of talent, or to the fact that people expected more than

Back cover of the sixteen page black and white courier issued by the Adam Forepaugh Circus in 1882. It was printed by the Courier Co.

could really be furnished, we know not. We were not there, but the universal expression is one of disappointment."

Adam Forepaugh in 1881 merged his talents with those of Lord Byron and the Irish poet, Thomas Moore, in an interpretation--or mis-interpretation--of the Moore's poem *Lalla Rookh*.

The idea for *Lalla Rookh* was given to Moore by Byron. The story is a long, laborious narrative of the journey of Lalla Rookh to Cashmere to marry the king of Bucharia. Feramor, a Cashmerian poet, provided entertainment along the way by reciting four narrative poems dealing with love and liberty. Lalla Rookh fell in love with the poet, and we can scarcely imagine her surprise and joy when the poet revealed himself to be the bridegroom.

The poem was published in 1817 and was viewed as wildly erotic. Generations of university students have repeated the following tribute to Thomas Moore:

"*Lalla Rookh*

Is a naughty book
By Thomas Moore
Who has written four
Each one warmer
Than the former
So that the most recent
Is the least decent."

Today, no one reads *Lalla Rookh*, but another work of Moore's is now and then rendered by maudlin Irish tenors--*The Last Rose of Summer*.

Forepaugh's press corps saw in the poem an excellent parade feature as well as a performance pageant. The story of Lalla Rookh was largely news to the general public, a fact which permitted many liberties--such as a meeting with Cleopatra. The project needed a focal point which the press department found in a national beauty contest to discover the most beautiful woman in America. A prize of \$10,000 was allegedly awarded the winner, Louise Montague.

The *Topeka Daily Capital*, June 6, 1881, ran an interview with one of the losers which has its share of sour grapes. One might title the story "The Cat's Meow."

"Miss Georgie Winnet, the young lady who represented the fame of Kentucky's beauty in the memorable contest for the handsomest lady in America, is about the medium size, and is what would be technically called a magnificent blonde. While not fleshy, Miss Winnet is plump. She was dressed in some dark material, neatly, but not in a style to set off her full grace, nor the splendid color of her 'head,' regarding her as a picture. She has a fine, frank face, with rather small but beautifully arched mouth, and pink lips. Her eyes are approaching brown in color, large and flashing, while her nose is well cut and almost classical. Her complexion is like a lily, with a faint tinge in her cheeks, but it is as transparent and smooth as enamel. This face is framed by a splendid suit of 'fluffy' golden hair, which she said reached to her waist, but which at the time was worn in a French twist down the back of the head.

"THE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION.

"I sent my picture in just for fun," she said to the reporter, "and the first I knew there came a letter telling me to come on to Philadelphia and meet four other girls. The letter said Mr. Forepaugh would allow me \$150 for expenses whether I was chosen or not. I showed it to my aunt and she thought if I could get \$10,000 that way it was a great thing, and so we started off. We got there, and all the girls met in the office. There was no committee that I saw except a hatchet-faced looking fel-

low with a big moustache who hawked around a heap and said things that he thought were very funny. He said he wanted to get us all to smile and then we smiled. We kept on going there three or four days, and then one at a time. Then he announced to us all in a letter that Miss Montague had been selected, and sent us a check for our \$150.'

"Did you see Miss Montague?"

"Yes, I did, and I think its a pretty good joke to call her the most beautiful woman in America. She is one of those shy, kittenish brunettes, with hatchet shoulders. She's got big brown eyes, and wears a big hat. I can pick out fifty girls here in Louisville that beat her looking all to pieces. She wasn't as good looking as the Chicago girl, Miss Edwards.'

"What is her style?"

"She is a brunette, and taller and heavier than Miss Montague, and a heap more stylish, in my mind,' said Miss Winnett, with a decided emphasis. They call her Miss Montague, but she is a married woman, or ought to be, and she's got a boy three years old. Her husband is Bobby Newcomb, a negro minstrel, and I heard yesterday that she played here with at the Kickerbocker varieties this winter, and was fired out of a hotel for treating her child cruelly. They said she went off and left the baby locked up in the dark in her room, without a nurse, while she was playing at the theatre and having a good time eating suppers after the show.'

"Are you certain of that?"

"All I am saying is what I have heard,' remarked the young lady with a wicked gleam, 'and she looks like one of those demure things that some people will go wild over, without finding out anything until it's too late.'

"The papers describe her as a very beautiful woman,' ventured the reporter. 'Yes, I've seen the papers; and they say she is going to get every report to write his name in her album, and that's why they say she is so per-fect-ly rav-ish-ing!'

"No, I haven't got anything to say against her. I don't envy her. I went in for it for fun, and I'm satisfied. But it makes me smile all over to see how they on about that little waspy thing."

The character of Louise Montague is in the long tradition of the dumb-but-not-so-dumb beauty. She is the ancestor of all of the innocent, put-upon, shy, helpless movie queens who realized that *Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend*.

The impersonation of Lalla Rookh

was so successful that Montague toured a second season with Adam Forepaugh. Between seasons she was interviewed by the *Philadelphia Press* and the story picked up by the *Capital*, December 29, 1881.



Louise Montague, Adam Forepaugh's \$10,000 beauty, appeared in the spec Lalla Rookh's Departure from Delhi during the 1882 season.

"I think it just too awfully mean for anything,' pouted Miss Louise Montague, Forepaugh's \$10,000 beauty, yesterday. 'Here I've been home since the 12th of November, and you're the first newspaper man who has been to see me. It's real mean.'

"The alleged vision of perfect female loveliness was found seated on a piano stool yesterday afternoon, in her boarding house on South Ninth street, by a *Press* reporter, to whom she gave such a cordial welcome that the young man's heart was nearly dislocated in its frantic efforts to beat a double tattoo against the walls of his chest. Nor did the words that followed tend to restore his equanimity.

"I love reporters,' chirruped the enchanting creature. 'I adore them. They are so handsome, so intelligent, so obliging, so--; why, I thing they are just lovely.'

"The young man never recovered his breath while the interview lasted suffi-

ciently to ask any but the most commonplace questions. He looked and listened and wondered.

"The fair Louise has a charming trick of rolling her eyeballs in a manner strongly suggestive of a colicky gazelle, and of displaying a pearly set of teeth most bewitchingly. Then she bites her nether lip to make it redder than it ought to be, and puts her head on one side, like a sparrow meditating over a grain of wheat. Louise frizzes her front hair, and falls over her forehead in well-simulated confusion. She laughs just as heartily as though she was not a \$10,000 beauty, and the loveliest attraction of the Mammoth Aggregation of Quintuplexal Wonders.

"THE BEAUTY'S VICTIMS.

"Yes,' said the beauty, with a sort of satisfied dejection, 'I think reporters are simply beautiful. Of course, Congressmen, navy and army officers fall in love with me, but pshaw! I never attempted to keep the run of them. It's too utterly foolish, you know. Why, bless your dear innocent soul, I'm actually harassed to death by thousands of love letters, and hundreds of attempts to seek an interview with me. Once in Indianapolis I received a magnificent bouquet with a tiny note concealed amid the flowers. What do you think it was like? I'll tell, if you promise not to,' and again did the divine creature cause her eyes to turn a double somersault. The visitor placed his hand on his false and hollow heart and promised.

"Well,' continued Miss Montague, in a lisping whisper, 'the writer was a prominent but bald-headed pork-packer. He wrote about this way:

"Light of my life! Would that I could call you that in reality, for my brain whirls, my limbs almost refuse their duty, my very heart seems to swell and burst when I think of you. Oh, my enslaver! Pity me! Think of the tortures I endure whenever my eyes rest on your bewildering beauty. If you only knew how I have gone to the circus night after night to worship at your shrine, your heart would melt. I succeeded in obtaining one of your hairpins from one of the circus men for \$3.50, and I sleep with it under my pillow. Only last night it stuck in my ear, and I am mad with joy.

"Your Despairing Slave."

"I paid no attention to the letter at all,' continued the Beauty, 'it was so awfully utterly absurd.'

"Is there any truth in the story, Miss Montague,' asked the reporter, 'about your husband, Paul Allen, having put

you up as a stake against \$10 in a game of poker with Bobby Newcomb, the minstrel?

"How ridiculous," laughed the beauty. "Why, of course there's no truth in it. The men don't know each other. I married Mr. Allen in San Francisco in 1877, was separated from him in 1878, because he loved the gaming table better than he did me, and then I went to New York, where I played *Josephine* in "Pinafore." Mr. Newcomb played *Ralph Rackstraw* in the the same company. It was then that the falsehood was manufactured by some malicious story tellers. Just if such a thing could be. And putting me up against \$10, too! How very funny. According to that, I had no "say" in the matter at all. No, sir; the whole thing is pure fiction."

"THE BEAUTY BREAKS LOOSE."

"You remember the story in the Western papers," continued the reporter, "headed 'A Terrible Catastrophe. People Fleeing for Their Lives. Lalla Rookh, the \$10,000 beauty of Forepaugh's circus escapes and produces the most intense consternation. The beautiful creature at large in the streets.' Did you escape?"

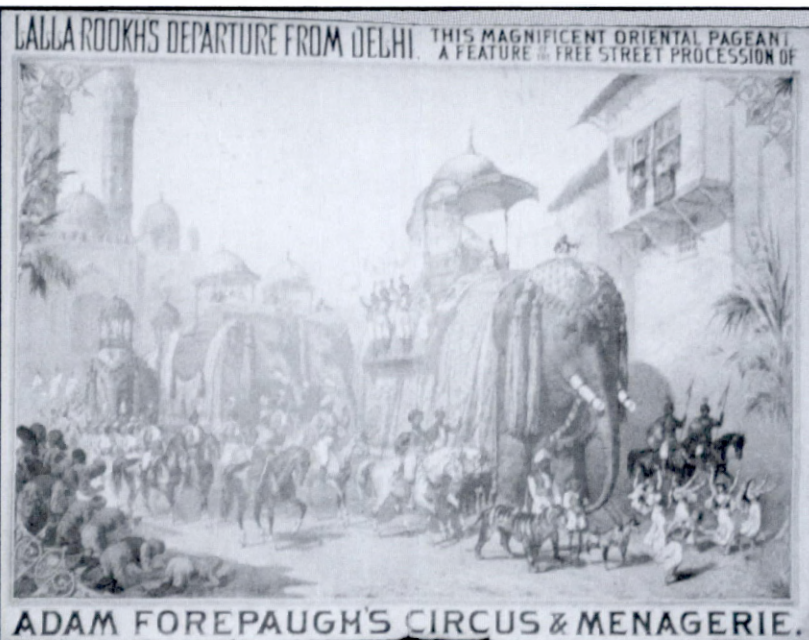
"Now, that's too, too bad," replied the beauty in a deprecating tone. "Of course I didn't. What awfully awful stories the papers do tell, to be sure. It's awful."

"Then what about the Third street broker of this city," persisted the newsman, "who is so desperately in love with you?"

"The fair enchantress smiled roughly. 'I'm sure,' said she, 'that I can't help it if people fall in love with me. Let me see, I know one, two, yes three-brokers on Third street. One of them is very rich. Maybe it's him. Dear me, how I am beset. Really, to answer the question truthfully, I don't know of any particular broker. I am not engaged to any that I remember.'

"Did you ever see the Minersville beauty who was your rival at the time the engagement was made?"

"Oh yes," was the reply. "She was rather pretty, but then her feet were big, and she was awkward. Now, you know, I possess the exact symmetry of form and feature. Once the length of the



This one sheet Strobbridge lithograph illustrated the grand Lalla Rookh spec in the 1882 Forepaugh show.

chin, the length of the nose, twice, the circumference of the wrist, the size of the neck, and all that sort of thing, you know. The Minersville girl was not a professional artiste, like myself, and would not suit Mr. Forepaugh at all. You know, I expect to have a theatrical company of my own, after I conclude my engagement with Mr. Forepaugh next season."

"Then you will give up being a beauty on a high-backed car, and breaking hearts by the bushel as you travel through the land?"

"Yes," replied Miss Montague, with a sigh. "I only took the position for the excitement. I liked it very much, but then you know the legitimate drama is my forte, and if I don't marry somebody with plenty of money, I'll carry out my determination in the fall of 1882."

"Then the beauty said good-bye, and the reporter with a decided feeling of emptiness about his heart, said farewell, and made his way into the prosaic street again."

During the season of 1882, Batcheller & Doris advertised the "\$10,000 Handsomest

Woman in America," and the Sells brothers, certainly no pikers, claimed the "Four Handsomest Women in America," but only Adam Forepaugh had Lalla Rookh.

FOOTNOTES


* A species of wild hog (*Babirusa alfuris*) found in the islands of Eastern Asia, the upper canine teeth of which, in the male, pierce the lip and grow upwards and backwards like horns.

** The Oxford English Dictionary defines *Pygopagus* as--"Twins united together in the region of the nates and having each its own pelvis."

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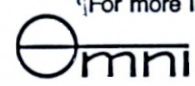
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